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““We must salute our goddess . . . and Bill shall lead us.””

THE NEW SOPHOMORE

BY
JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON
AUTHOR OF "BUTT CHANLER, FRESHMAN"



ILLUSTRATED



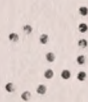
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TO
THE "BOYS OF '06"
AND ALL OTHER GOOD AND TRUE
FOLLOWERS OF
SABRINA

FOREWORD

SOME ingenious person, I am told, has succeeded in ferreting out the place of which I thought "Tresham" was such a clever disguise, and no longer am I able to conceal the shortcomings of these attempts to picture certain phases of the life there under the protection of a fictitious name. So, although I still cling to that name out of gratitude for the security I once fancied it gave me, I have dropped all other subterfuge and boldly call some things as they are actually called by real people.

But lest this story fall into the hands of some other ingenious person—and I am obtruding myself in this preface for his eye alone—I wish to say a word of warning. Let no one who may chance to read the following pages deceive himself with the idea that the key to any mystery is contained therein. Not a thing would I tell, for all the world, that might point the way to any holy of holies for a profane outsider, and anyone, no matter how ingenious, who imagines he can find a workable clue to the mystery of Sabrina will search for it in vain.

Verbum sap.

THE AUTHOR.

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THE NEW SOPHOMORE

CHAPTER I

THE LATE ARRIVAL

GET into it, freshman! What are you doing there?"

Before he realized that he was the "freshman" meant, the fellow watching on the edge of the crowd found himself grabbed and sent whirling into the thick of the rush. It was a mistake: he was not a freshman at all. But there was no time to explain that it was the sophomore class he was planning to enter. He was straightway in the very heart of the fight, and because he had been eager to take a hand in it anyway, there he remained, forgetful of everything but the excitement of battle, until time was called and he was forcibly made to release a wriggly little fellow whom he had managed to get down and sit upon.

The two of them got to their feet together, the little fellow red and ruffled, the new sophomore grinning broadly. He could not help it, the other looked so like an angry little fighting cock.

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"What's your name?" demanded the little fellow.

"Bill," answered the new sophomore, still grinning.

"Your last name?" The little fellow evidently resented being sat upon, and he spoke sharply.

"My last name's Bill."

The other looked at him, scowling, as if he was trying to decide whether he were being trifled with or not, and then turned away. Several upperclassmen who were standing about laughed.

"You'll have to get after him, Butt," one of them called after him. "That's the president of the sophomore class you've been trying to jolly, Mr. Bill," he added, for he also was making the mistake of taking the new man for a freshman, and it is the privilege of juniors to correct freshmen when they seem to need it.

"Oh, thank you," said the new sophomore, and he, too, walked away. He seemed to be a very fresh freshman indeed.

Their mistake was not unnatural, for it was the first time any of them had ever seen him. He had arrived in town quite late the evening before, very weary and ready to crawl straight into bed, and that morning he had overslept, so that when he started for chapel he was serenely ignorant that the chapel exercises, though held late that first day,

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were already nearly half over and college had begun without him.

So instead of morning prayers he had arrived upon a scene of tumult which past experience immediately told him was a rush. A coatless mob was apparently struggling for possession of the front steps, while another mob—not coatless and therefore, he argued, upperclassmen—stood about and urged on the conflict. He had been mingling with the coated ones, wishing that he knew freshmen from sophomores so he could get into it, too, when some junior unceremoniously changed him from spectator to participant and fight he must, anyway, with no thought of which side was which.

After his little episode with “ Butt ” he walked away, amused at the idea of that little fellow’s “ getting after him.” His principal feeling, however, was that he was really a Tresham man now, and he knew at least the nickname of one of his classmates. He would get acquainted with more of them presently, but in the meantime there were other things to attend to.

He had never been in Tresham before, but he had as accurate an idea of the college grounds as one can get from the map that then adorned the front page of the college catalogue, and he easily found his way to Langton Hall, presented his papers from the mid-western college where he had spent

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the year before, and was thereupon enrolled a member of the sophomore class—the class of Noughty-Even. He also looked up the courses he would have to take, but that was merely to find out what was ahead of him. He had no intention of starting work on lessons until he had found a room to live in.

He finally decided upon an uninteresting looking house not far from the campus, where an uninteresting looking woman assured him several times that she had no room to rent—she wouldn't have students around the place anyway—and ended by giving him a big chamber looking out on the western hills, the like of which he could not have happened upon again if he had hunted a week.

“But you've got to understand one thing, young man,” she declared. “I don't like students—I never did, and for the life of me I don't know why I'm takin' you in this way, and you a perfect stranger and all that. But the minute you start any monkey shines, out you go, bag and baggage, and that's flat.”

He agreed that flat it was, and the bargain was closed. By supper time he had harassed an expressman into bringing his trunk and boxes, wheedled a storekeeper into delivering some new furniture on the same day it was ordered, and got himself completely and comfortably settled. Mrs. Sleeper came up when all was done to look at the result.

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"It won't last," she declared. "It looks real nice, but it won't last. I never knew the man yet 't could keep things looking decent, much less a boy. You'd ought to shift that chair around so's't the light'll fall over your left shoulder."

He obligingly shifted the chair, then after she had gone decided he liked it better the other way and shifted it back again. Then he went up to the hotel for supper.

Altogether it had been a pretty good day. He was housed quite to his satisfaction, and now he could look around and begin to get acquainted. The little taste of action he had got in the chapel rush rather whetted his appetite, and he decided to look up some of his new classmates later in the evening and see if there wasn't something going on. They would probably be visiting freshmen, and that might prove interesting. He wondered what sort of hazing they did at Tresham.

It was still daylight when he left the hotel and strolled across the common. There were plenty of fellows about, and he was wondering whether he hadn't better introduce himself to some of them when he saw a group of three coming straight for him—the little sophomore he had sat upon earlier in the day between two others who towered over him like giants. They stopped in front of him and the little fellow spoke.

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"Where is your room?" he demanded.

It was rather unceremonious, but he remembered that it was not the first time that day he had been taken for a freshman. Well, he didn't mind—the joke was really on the others.

"At Mrs. Sleeper's," he answered, just the flicker of a smile touching the corner of his mouth.

"Be in your room at half past seven," was the curt command and the three moved on.

The same three presented themselves at Mrs. Sleeper's front door at the appointed hour and were met there by Mrs. Sleeper herself. She did not know that her visitors included not only President Chanler of the sophomore class, but "Bull" Durham and "Husky" Hawkins, two of the greatest heroes then engaged in accumulating glory for the Tresham football team. It would not have mattered, probably, if she had.

"If you mean Mr. Bill, he's upstairs," she said in answer to their query if there were a freshman living there. "And if you're friends of his it's all right. But you aren't coming in unless he wants to see you. I'm not going to have any of this hazing business going on in my house."

"I think he'll come down and see us—we have an appointment with him. Would you mind telling him Mr. Chanler is waiting for him?"

The new sophomore came down immediately.

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"I'm sorry I can't invite you in," he remarked, "but Mrs. Sleeper doesn't like your looks. She feels sure you want to haze me."

It was quite dark now, but he knew the three exchanged looks of amazement.

"We're going up to the Dorms," said Chanler shortly, and started to lead the way.

"Do you—excuse me, but am I invited, too?"

"Invited!" exclaimed Hawkins, the biggest of the trio, and his voice rolled out in a huge growl. "What do you think this is—a tea party? We're going to take you up to the Dorms to haze you—that's the kind of a party it is. Step along, now."

"Just a minute till I get my hat—" and the new sophomore was in the house and flying up the stairs before they could stop him.

Durham—the fat one—laughed. "He's a case for you, Butt," he chuckled. "Is he just plain, ordinary fresh, or what?"

The new sophomore was back, wearing a felt hat, before Chanler had time to answer, and himself started to lead the way to the campus. The others fell in behind him, stricken silent by sheer surprise.

"How do you manage the hazing?" he inquired politely. "Do you take them individually or collectively?"

"You'll see when we get there." Chanler meant to be impressive, but he succeeded only in being curt.

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It is hard to be impressive to a fellow who has had you on the ground and sat on you—especially when you feel pretty sure he is chuckling to himself at the memory of it. “Did you know,” he went on after they had climbed the campus hill in silence for a moment, “that the freshmen all wear caps here—little black caps?”

“No, do they?” Hawkins scowled and Durham grinned at the tone, just bordering on freshness, but not near enough to be unmistakably intentional. “I should think their ears would be cold in the winter. You have pretty cold winters here, haven’t you?”

He received no answer. They had reached the first dormitory by this time, and Chanler led the way into a room on the ground floor. A small crowd of sophomores were sitting about in a circle wherein stood two very nervous freshmen.

“Here he is,” announced Chanler, and the new sophomore was pushed, none too politely, into the middle of the room. He removed his hat and made a calm survey of the little circle. Hawkins had taken his stand in front of the fireplace, leaning one elbow on the mantel. He fixed his man with a stern gaze.

“What’s your name?” he questioned gruffly.

The new sophomore returned his look with an eye that twinkled just the tiniest bit. “Bill,” he answered.

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"Any relation to Buffalo Bill?" called out a voice from the corner.

"Not that I ever heard of," answered Bill serenely, his eyes still on Hawkins.

"What's your whole name?" Hawkins went on, scowling.

"Ridgeway Bill, Jr."

"When did you get into town?"

"Last night on the half past ten trolley from Southboro. I came from Omaha, Neb., where I was born eighteen years ago the twenty-second day of last June. My father——"

"You can cut out the family history," interrupted Hawkins. He had an uneasy suspicion that under his eager politeness Bill was taking things entirely too much as a joke. "If you don't happen to know it you are up here to entertain us. The gentlemen here assembled are members of the class of Noughty-Even, and you should look upon being allowed to entertain them as a privilege and an honor."

Bill inclined his head.

"I appreciate the privilege—and the honor," he said quietly. "What can I do for you? I shall be happy to try anything you suggest."

It sounded meek enough. Hawkins stared at him almost in surprise and then turned to Chanler.

"What'll he do, Butt?" he asked.

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Chanler had perched on the edge of the desk, where he sat watching Bill with a suspicious glint in his eyes.

"Perhaps he'd better suggest something himself," he replied. "It will be a good test of his taste—we hope he has good taste."

"I could sing a song for you." Bill spoke hesitatingly, with a downward look that surely meant modesty.

"Go ahead, then," commanded Hawkins shortly.

"I could do much better if I had some sort of an instrument—you haven't got a piano or an organ around, have you?—or a tambourine——"

"No, we haven't! Go on and do your singing."

"It's a duet I'm going to sing, a duet for soprano and tenor. Of course I can't do both parts at once, both at the same time, but, perhaps—I am sure you can fill in the one I'm not singing with your imagination. It really is a very lovely song, but I wish I had an instrument. Are you sure there isn't a piano hidden away somewhere?" He peered in the direction of the closet door, which stood ajar.

Hawkins's face was very red and he shot a wrathful glance at Durham, who lay giggling foolishly on the window seat.

"Cut that!" he growled. "If you're going to sing, sing!"

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Bill gave him a reproachful look, then drew himself suddenly erect, hands clasped tightly in front of him, eyes raised to the ceiling, and began.

“ Oh, that we two were Maying,
Down the stream of the soft spring breeze !
Like children, with violets playing,
In the shade——”

At the first note everybody let out a gasp. It was horrible—weirder singing they had never heard, and the worst of it was, the singer seemed to think he was making sounds of matchless beauty. Then Durham turned his face to the wall and laughed till he choked, Chanler averted his head and the others tittered. A rapt smile came to Bill's face, and he sang on, his eyes fixed in an ardent gaze on an upper corner of the room. Hawkins glared. For the life of him he could not make out whether Bill was only acting like a conceited fool or really was one. The two freshmen had drawn back against the wall, uncertain whether to laugh or be sorry for their classmate.

Then Bill shifted to the soprano part, his voice rising in a tremulous, passionate falsetto. In the midst of it the hall door opened and three more freshmen were “shooed” into the room by a tall and freckled sophomore who stopped aghast at the sight and sound that greeted him. “That's McCar-

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thy, the pitcher," whispered one of the freshmen behind Bill.

Hawkins suddenly made up his mind.

"Stop it!" he yelled above the screeching of Bill's song. Bill stopped, a look of hurt surprise on his face. McCarthy stepped forward and looked him over.

"What's the matter with him?" he asked.

"Mac!" Chanler touched the newcomer on the arm and drew him back to the window seat, while Hawkins addressed himself to telling Bill what he thought of fresh freshmen. "That's Freshman Bill," Chanler whispered, chuckling, "and he *is* fresh. But it was too good to stop. Husky didn't know whether he was putting it on or not, and it was such a circus watching him trying to make out whether he was being kidded. We'll have to give this Bill fellow a special session afterwards."

"Me for him!" McCarthy turned to resume his inspection of Bill, who was looking serenely into Hawkins's angry face. "Come on, you!" He beckoned to the three freshmen he had brought in with him. "Step forward and show the gentlemen what you're good for. You can fade away for the present," he added to Bill. "Fade back into that corner there."

Bill looked at him with interest as he stepped into the corner indicated. McCarthy took hold of things

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with a master hand and the three freshmen were put through a series of stunts that kept the room in an uproar. But presently the interest in them began to wane and McCarthy dismissed them.

"Trot along home to bed, now," he commanded. They were glad enough to obey and hurried out of the room in short order. "Now let's have a look at Freshman Bill."

But "Freshman" Bill was nowhere to be seen. While everybody's interest was centered in McCarthy and his doings, he had quietly walked out of the room, as one of the freshmen stationed against the wall testified.

The outraged sophomores stared at one another. Such arrogance was inconceivable—insufferable. The way he had borne himself toward Hawkins was bad enough—they realized now they had made a mistake in treating it lightly at the time, though they had meant to punish him for it later. But now—The two freshmen who were still in the room were heartily thankful not to be in Bill's shoes.

"If he's in his room I'll get him," said Hawkins grimly and slammed out into the hall.

He wasn't in his room.

"I don't believe it's any of your business where he is, but he isn't here," Mrs. Sleeper declared, eyeing Hawkins suspiciously. "I should think you'd know—he went out with you."

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Hawkins had to take her word for it and go back empty-handed, hoping they had found him hiding in some other freshman's room. But the hope was vain. No one had seen "Freshman" Bill.

"That landlady of his has got him hidden somewhere," Hawkins grumbled. "I know it from the way she looked at me. But wait till to-morrow!"

In the meantime others had to bear the brunt of his wrath. In his ordinary frame of mind Hawkins would have hung around looking on at the hazing for a little while and then gone home to bed, finding the whole thing too much trouble for the little fun there was in it. But with the thought of Bill to goad him on, he won that night the reputation of being a terror and a scourge. Freshmen quailed before him, and even the sophomores who were following in his wake saw things that made them open their eyes.

Chanler, as sophomore president, felt officially responsible for seeing that all freshmen were properly visited, and his frequent tours of inspection gave him other things to think of than Ridgeway Bill, Jr. Bill would get what was coming to him in good time, he felt, and there was no use in getting excited over his disappearance now. He couldn't stay in hiding forever. Besides, Chanler had taken rather a fancy to the supposed freshman. The way he had

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played with Hawkins had made fun enough to counteract its freshness.

It was close upon ten o'clock, and Chanler had about decided that it was time to pass along the "Cut it out for to-night" signal when he bethought him of a certain freshman named Burnet whom he had not seen that evening. Burnet had come from Chanler's home town and was pledged to Chanler's fraternity. He roomed on the top floor of South College and thither Chanler repaired—to make sure Burnet had got his, he told himself. He found Burnet's door locked and strange noises issuing from within.

"Open up, Freshman!" he called, rattling the door knob.

"Who is it?" a voice answered, a voice he did not recognize.

"No matter who it is. Open up!"

The door was not opened and the strange noises continued. Chanler rapped sharply.

"Open up!" he repeated. "This is Chanler!"

The key turned in the lock and Burnet himself opened the door. Chanler entered and stopped with a gasp. Five freshmen were sprawled on the floor in various queer attitudes, emitting the strange noises he had heard and which they did not interrupt on his entrance. Seated on a table between the two windows, his coat off, his felt hat pushed far back

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on his forehead, was Ridgeway Bill, Jr., of Omaha, Neb., apparently engaged in hazing some of his own classmates.

"Come in," he said, smiling genially. "This—this thing we have before us is a freshman automobile. Freshman A, there—it's a lot easier to call them by letters—is the headlight, Freshman B is the steering wheel, Freshman C is the crank——"

"If you haven't the biggest nerve!" Chanler had recovered his voice and he stepped forward with wrath in his eye. "What do you——"

"Freshman D is the tonneau," went on Bill with increasing enthusiasm, "and Freshman E—, our host," indicating Burnet, who was running wildly and aimlessly about the room, "is the smell. Don't you think it's a rather good idea?"

"I think——" Chanler stopped to find adequate words. A freshman hazing his own classmates was not a thing to be dealt with lightly.

"Shut the thing off," Bill directed quietly. The various noises ceased. "All but the smell," he added. "Freshman E, you'll have to smell a little while longer, till you vanish into thin air. You might begin vanishing right away, however, and hurry it up."

Burnet gradually ceased his wild maneuvers and at length disappeared into the closet. "That is Freshman E's own idea of what a smell acts like,"

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Bill went on. "I don't know whether it's a good one or not. I never saw a smell before, but probably——"

"Well!" It was the only exclamation that Chanler could think of, but it served to stem Bill's serene flow of words.

"Well?" Bill echoed inquiringly, getting down from the table.

Chanler faced him, flushed with indignation.

"I don't know what kind of an idea you have about college, or the way freshmen are expected to act. But whatever it is——" He stopped abruptly, staring.

"Well?" Bill repeated.

Chanler continued to stare and stepped nearer, unconsciously pointing to a pin fastened to Bill's shirt.

"Isn't—isn't that a Kappa Chi pin?"

"Yes."

"Are you—but aren't you a freshman? Are you a Kappa Chi?"

"Yes—Beta, Noughty-Even."

Chanler was too astonished to speak. Slowly he put out his hand, Bill met it with the Kappa Chi grip, and a broad grin spread over both their faces.

"Then you're going to be in my class!" Chanler exclaimed.

"Sure! You all took me for a freshman and

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I thought I'd let you think so for a while—it wasn't bad fun——”

The stamping of feet in the hallway, pausing just outside the door, interrupted him. The door opened and a band of sophomores entered, led by McCarthy and Hawkins, still on the warpath. Durham followed immediately behind. They stood still in amazement at the sight of Bill and Chanler, still with hands clasped.

“Here's your man, Husky,” said Chanler, turning to them with a beaming smile. “We made a mistake. He's in our class—a new man. Come here—I want to introduce you. Brother Bill—Brother Hawkins.”

Hawkins's grim face slowly softened and broke into a grin.

“By Golly!” he exclaimed, as he seized Bill's hand in a grip that threatened to crush it. “I was going to haze the life out of you! Do you know you're about the freshest sophomore that ever struck this place?”

CHAPTER II

SIZING UP

THEY straightway took their new classmate down to the house—to Chanler, Durham, and Hawkins there was only one “the” house—and the brethren of Kappa Chi gave him a reception that was all the heartier for coming a day late.

“You ought to have come right down here last night,” Chanler protested. “Nobody ever goes to the hotel if there’s anywhere else to go, and you know this house is your home.”

“I know—but I was dead to the world when I got in, and the only thing I could think of was bed. Besides, I’d have missed being hazed, if I had, and it isn’t everybody that can have that two years running.”

They made a long evening of it, sitting about a huge fire and talking until the chapel clock was striking well into the small hours. When Bill finally got up and insisted upon going to his own room he knew that he liked Tresham and liked it well. The

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welcome he had been given warmed him to the heart, and the sophomores especially had received him into their little group in a thorough-going fashion that made him feel at home already.

The next morning Mrs. Sleeper had to submit to a small-sized reception in his room which descended upon her like an invasion while she was sweeping and putting things to rights. They came trooping up the stairs without stopping to ring the front door bell—Chanler, Hawkins, Durham, and another Kappa Chi sophomore named Gray—and with a cheery “Good-morning” calmly took possession of the room. Bill was not yet back from chapel and Mrs. Sleeper eyed the invaders with suspicion.

“Bill will be right down,” Chanler announced, “and he told us to come right up.”

Mrs. Sleeper made no reply, but gathered up her dust-pan and broom and departed, leaving the visitors to look about them. It was an ordinary enough room, without very much to distinguish its owner from any one of a hundred other Tresham sophomores. A mandolin on the couch may or may not have meant that he was musical—remembering the way he had slaughtered “Oh, that we two were Maying!” the night before they were inclined to be skeptical—and the large number of books seemed to indicate that he was fond of reading. On the mantel were two or three athletic trophies—a silver

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cup, won, according to its inscription, in a diving contest, and a couple of others that were prizes in some track meet. A tennis racket and a bag of golf sticks stood in a corner.

“Will you look at this!” exclaimed Gray, who was inspecting the bookcase. “Brother Billiam must be a regular specialist in detective stories. Look at what he’s got lined up here—a whole shelf full of them—everything from Nick Carter and Old Sleuth to Sherlock Holmes.”

“It isn’t a bad collection, is it?” They looked up and discovered Bill grinning in the doorway. “I hope you don’t think they’re just trash—of course some of them are, but just because they’re detective stories I mean. I’ve got a whole stack of paper-covered ones at home that I couldn’t bring along, but there’s the cream of ’em right there. I picked up a new one the other day that’s pretty good. Ever read this?” He went to the shelf and took out a red-covered volume. “It’s by a new man, but he’s got a fellow here that I’d put up against Sherlock Holmes any day,” he began enthusiastically, and then stopped, laughing. “I’ve been nutty over these things ever since I was a kid,” he explained, “and I don’t suppose I’ll ever think there’s anything quite so fine as being a detective. Anyway, I’m like that old fellow in Davis’s ‘In the Fog’—you get me listening to something where there’s a

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mystery to be cleared up and you can keep me up all night."

"I was reading one coming up on the train the other day that wasn't bad," remarked Hawkins with the ponderous air of one delivering a weighty judgment. "Something about an American who was a Japanese spy."

"Oh, I know the one you mean—where the Russian countess, or whatever she was, turns out to be the fellow's mother? I read that. Say, do you honestly think that was any good? Why, I knew how it was coming out almost from the beginning——"

"Go on—you didn't!" Hawkins was helpless as an infant in the face of anything approaching a mystery, and his tone was utterly incredulous.

"Sure. The whole thing was plain as day after the third chapter. Of course there was a lot of stuff thrown in to fill up, but the thing came out just as I thought it would."

"Can you really work out things like that?" asked Chanler, who had taken up the red-covered book and was skimming through the first chapter.

"Not anything very elaborate, but I like to try it. Old Dupin, you know, in those stories of Poe's, was about as keen as any of 'em, and I'm all the time trying to observe things and build up theories about them the way he did."

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"Can you detect anything about me?" Durham had stretched himself out on the couch and he put the question with the smile that was continually hovering over his broad face.

Bill looked at him a moment.

"I should say you barely made chapel this morning," he said.

"You saw him come in!" broke in Hawkins. "Besides, that's a safe bet any morning if you know Bull—he's always trailing in just after the last gun's fired."

"Shut up, Husky! let him build up his theory!"

"I should say further that you did not have time to eat all your breakfast—also that you have not finished unpacking your things yet, and that you have started the year with some good resolutions."

Durham looked around at the others with a perplexed grin.

"Do any of you see crazy things like that sticking out on me anywhere?" he asked.

"But aren't they so?" Bill persisted.

"Why, yes—some of them—but how did you know?"

"Wait a minute," interrupted Gray, "let's see if he can do the trick twice before he tells how he does it. Just cast your eagle eye on me and see what it sees."

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Bill looked Gray over with a quick, half humorous glance.

"There's isn't so much—at least, not the same kind of things. I guess you had to hurry some this morning, too. I should say you are generally pretty regular in your habits—rather particular, in fact."

"Right, Sherlock! He's a regular old woman," laughed Chanler. "You seem to be pretty keen on telling what time people got up—how about me?"

"Can't tell. There isn't anything about you to tell by."

"But how did you know those other things—the things about me?" asked Durham. "Of course there's some way that's perfectly silly, it's so simple—the fellow that the story-book detective explains things to always seems like a blooming idiot; but I give it up—what's the answer?"

Bill laughed. "It was mostly guesswork, with what I already knew about you to help me out and two or three little somethings to start with. Did I really hit on anything?"

"You hit on everything, except that about good resolutions. I don't know just what you meant by that."

"Well, there's mud on your shoes——"

"Oh, Lord! and I've wiped 'em all over your couch!"

"It won't hurt anything—I thought you prob-

SIZING UP

ably got it there by going through some wet grass before crossing the road—it isn't muddy to-day. From that I inferred that you probably didn't have much time to get to chapel in, so you took a short cut. You were running, because your shoes sank into the dirt deeper than they would if you'd just been walking, and as your shoes were wet, the dirt stuck. If you'd had plenty of time you'd have stayed on the sidewalk, where there's no wet grass and no dirt to speak of."

"That's just imagination," grunted Hawkins.

"That's all detective theories ever are—imagination and logic and plenty of common sense."

"But how about the rest of it—the breakfast and the unpacking?" Durham questioned.

"You've got an orange or a good-sized apple in your coat pocket that I suppose you didn't have time to eat at the table. You are wearing a jersey that's a lot too small for you and probably belongs to some one else, which I don't imagine you'd be doing if you'd unpacked your own, because it looks like a pretty tight fit. And the good resolution part was just a guess, to impress you with. I thought probably you'd resolved not to begin cutting chapel so early in the year, or you'd have stayed and eaten your whole breakfast in comfort instead of racing off 'cross lots to make it in time."

"Good! I did have some such idea as that."

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Durham lay back and chuckled. "Only I've made that same old resolution so often that I don't even remember when I do it now. But how about Gray—he hasn't any mud on his shoes."

"No, but he cut himself shaving this morning, so I thought he might have been in a hurry."

"That was Butt's old razor—it's as dull as a hoe."

"Use somebody else's then," replied Butt serenely. "That's one thing you're not fussy about, anyway. How did you hit on the fussy habits, Bill?"

"Well, if he weren't rather fussy, he'd have waited till later when he had more time—it's a fussy man that'll shave himself just to go to chapel, you know."

"Well, I still think it's nothing but imagination," persisted Hawkins. "Those signs you went by might as well have meant something else as the things they did."

"Don't mind him, Bill," Chanler remarked. "Husky tries to act like a chronic knocker, but he isn't really. There's a Christian motive behind it all—he does it for the good of our souls, and if he seems to be hitting at you it only means that he's taking a kindly interest in your welfare."

"That'll be about all from you, little one," and Hawkins proceeded to squelch his small classmate by burying him among the cushions on the couch. "We

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really came down here on business this morning," he went on when the tussle had subsided. "Why don't you come down to the house to live, Bill? We can make room for you, if you don't mind going in with Tommy Gray and me."

"Sure! It's all nonsense, your cooping yourself up all alone 'way over here," said Durham, sitting up and speaking very earnestly.

"We'd like to have you down at the house a lot," added Gray.

Bill looked at them in silence a moment—a half smile on his lips. It was good to be taken this way by these fellows.

"It's mighty kind of you——" he began.

"Shucks! We want you," broke in Hawkins.

"That's how you're kind, and it means a lot to me. But I can't do it. I made up my mind when I came here I'd live by myself this year, and I think I'd better stick to it. I've got to, in fact."

"Why?"

"Well, I put in a pretty shiftless year last year. I did about everything I could do except work, and the result was I just squeezed through by the skin of my teeth. The old man was pretty sore about it and wouldn't let me go back where the old crowd was. He wasn't going to let me go back to college at all, but I finally got him to let me try it here for

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a year. Now it's up to me to make good. If I don't it's hard work in an office for little William."

"Now look here, Bill!" Chanler extricated himself from the heap of pillows and got to his feet, assuming what Durham called his "presidential attitude," as he always did when he had an argument to drive home. "We manage to have about as good a time as any fellows in college, but you mustn't get the idea we're a gang of loafers. Gray there is a regular shark—he's got his Phi Beta Kappa key cinched already—and there isn't one of us that has a condition. Bull and Husky couldn't have last year and play football, and I couldn't without being a bad example, and the habit stuck. We don't kill ourselves, but we manage not to get behind, and we pull pretty respectable marks. We worked out a system last year for mutual benefit and protection, and Bull can tell you what happened when he got on the ragged edge in Math."

"It was something awful!" supplemented Durham. "I never put in such a time in my life. They just hounded me till there wasn't any more danger of my flunking. I tell you, no one can travel with Butt and Husky and not keep up in his work."

"I wasn't afraid you fellows would lead me astray—please don't think that," Bill protested. "It may turn out that I'll need some loving hand to guide me and keep me in shape, but I want to give myself

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a chance at it alone first. If I haven't it in me to stick to a thing and see it through by myself I want to find it out."

Chanler made no further plea. He was not bad at reading people, and he saw not only that Bill's mind was made up, but that being made up it was not likely to change. Hawkins, however, still continued the assault.

"I think you're making a mountain out of something that isn't even a respectable sized molehill," he pursued stubbornly. "You can study at the house if you want to, and you'll be with the fellows there. You're a new man here, and I should think that would be something: it would make it lots quicker and easier for you to get acquainted."

"*Please*, I know every single thing I'm missing by staying here, but I've got to stay. For another thing, I had the hardest job I ever tackled getting Mrs. Sleeper to give me a room, and I can't go back on her now. Besides, I rather want to prove to her that college students are really human beings: she thinks they're some sort of a dangerous wild animal."

"It isn't such a terribly serious matter after all," remarked Gray. "It's only a few minutes' walk down to the house anyway, and we'll see a lot of one another."

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"Right you are, Tommy——"

"*Mr. Bill!*" Mrs. Sleeper's voice came up to them in a shrill call from below. Another visitor proved to be the cause of it—McCarthy, the sophomore who had been about to take Bill in hand the night before when it was discovered that he had disappeared. He came bounding up the stairs and into the room, with his lean, freckled face twisted into as merry a grin as ever sat upon a homely countenance.

"I've been hunting all over thunder for Butt Chanler," he announced, "and somebody said he left chapel with you. Anything private going on?"

"Not a bit. Come on in and sit down—unless you want to see Chanler alone," was Bill's greeting.

"Bill's been having a little reception, and incidentally telling us things about ourselves. What do you see about Mac, Bill? Anything you aren't ashamed to tell?" asked Durham with a laugh.

"What's the game?" asked McCarthy, emptying some tobacco into a cigarette paper. "Fortune-telling? Nothing doing with me. I haven't got one. My face is my fortune, and you see what that's good for."

"Oh, he doesn't do that sort of thing. He gives you a careless glance and then tells you what time you got up and whether you had to hurry to get to chapel and a few little things like that."

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McCarthy's eyes twinkled as he lighted his cigarette.

"Go as far as you like. Do you think you can tell from just a careless glance what time I got to chapel?"

"You didn't get to chapel this morning," answered Bill quietly.

"*What?*"

"Did you?"

"No. But——"

"Didn't I tell you he could tell you things?" asked Durham triumphantly. "Go on, Bill, you're doing fine."

Bill looked at McCarthy questioningly.

"Sure—go as far as you like," McCarthy repeated, and the twinkle crept back into his eyes. "What time did I get up?"

"You didn't go to bed," said Bill slowly. "You only took a nap with your clothes on, and when you woke up you rushed right out to find Chanler. You were out pretty late, and you had a pretty rough night of it. It was wet as well as rough, and you did a good deal of beating around through woods and fields."

McCarthy's jaw dropped, and the others stared at Bill as if he had been seized with a fit of lunacy.

"Well!" ejaculated Hawkins. "That's going

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some! How did you hit on that particular kind of a pipe dream? ”

“ Isn’t it true? ” asked Bill.

McCarthy nodded his head in bewilderment.

“ Yes, but—you didn’t dope that all out yourself, did you? ”

The others turned their stares from Bill to McCarthy.

“ Oh, Bill’s a regular Sherlock Holmes,” said Chanler at length. “ He doped it out himself all right, unless it’s a put-up job between you.”

“ It isn’t,” protested McCarthy. “ But it beats me. Who told you? ”

“ Nobody.”

“ How did you know it, then? ” asked Chanler.

“ Well, he practically said himself that he wasn’t at chapel—he wanted to see you, and he’d have seen you if he’d been there. Then his clothes look—er—sort of slept in, and there’s a feather sticking on the back of his coat. Didn’t you go to sleep on some pillows with your coat on? ” he asked, turning to McCarthy.

“ Yes—on the couch. I didn’t go to bed.”

“ Well, you’d have got undressed and gone to bed if it hadn’t been pretty well along toward morning, and you were anxious not to oversleep. Your shoes and clothes have had mud on them, and one of your legs has been in water up to the knee.

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There's a piece of a burr sticking to the right leg of your trousers and another one higher up, and there's a twig caught in the side of your coat. You evidently didn't stop to brush up before you started out this morning—so you must have been in a hurry."

McCarthy was examining his clothes with rather a shamefaced expression.

"I do look pretty seedy. Got a brush broom around anywhere? Say, I'll take off my hat to you, Bill," he exclaimed, as he vigorously attacked his coat with the clothes brush. "If you can tell me what I was doing out last night, you're the only and original Hawkshaw, King of Detectives."

Bill puckered up his forehead and then smiled.

"It must have been something to do with the class because you wanted to see Chanler. I guess you must have been doing some hazing—that was the only class business going on last night."

McCarthy threw the brush into a corner.

"He's hit it," he said, turning to Butt.

"What do you mean?"

"I tried some hazing on my own account after you fellows had gone, and I came pretty near making a mess out of it. I didn't get in till almost five o'clock this morning."

"What!"

"You oughtn't to have done that, Mac," said Butt. "We agreed to cut it out at ten o'clock."

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"I know that—but you listen a minute."

"But you might get into all sorts of trouble," protested Butt. He was evidently getting more and more disturbed the more he thought about it. "Five o'clock in the morning! Why it's criminal to keep a freshman out all night like that! If the faculty get hold of it they'll make a terrible fuss about it, and nobody'll blame them."

"Won't you wait and hear about it?" cried McCarthy impatiently. "I've thought of all that, but I don't care if they do find it out. I'd do the same thing over again—and I'm not through with it yet."

"Now, Mac, you're going to be reasonable!" said Butt. "You're not going to do anything foolish. I should think you'd done enough of that already."

"Let him tell his story," interrupted Hawkins.

But McCarthy was ruffled and needed some smoothing down before he was willing to go on with his tale.

"You'd have done something yourself," he said finally. "After you fellows had left the Dorms, I thought I'd go home myself and go to bed. I wasn't looking for trouble—if anyone ever tells you that hazing isn't hard work, you can tell him he's a liar. He doesn't know what he's talking about. I'd had enough of it at ten o'clock."

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“Why didn’t you go home then?”

“I tell you I was going to. But I wanted a match, and I stopped to get one from one of the freshmen. I was just going to open the door of his room when I heard a great racket inside, and of course I stopped to listen. They were laughing a lot as if something pretty funny was going on. It didn’t take long to find out what it was. Some freshman was telling them how he’d dodged the sophomores, and how many times they’d come pretty near catching him, and how clever he was, and kept fooling them, and stayed hiding till they’d all gone.”

“That’s rot,” interrupted Chanler. “We didn’t know about any freshman hiding at all—except Bill.”

“Of course it was—nobody had hunted for him at all; they didn’t know there was any such person. But he was hiding all right, or some of us would have come across him. But anyway he made a great yarn about it, and he was a great hero—those freshmen thought it was the best joke they’d ever heard. As soon as I saw what was going on I walked in on ’em. They shut up like clams, and that freshman just sat there and looked foolish.”

“Who was he?”

“Nichols, or Nicholson, or something like that—nobody I’d ever heard of before. He couldn’t have been here during rushing or I’d have seen him. He had ‘quitter’ written all over him—eyes that

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sort of shifted and never looked square at you. I sized him up right away, and asked him what the funny story was I'd butted in on. I guess he decided I looked easy. Anyway, he began to swell out his chest and spout about how he wasn't going to be ordered around by any sophomore, and a lot of big talk like that. It would have made you sore if you'd been there—it couldn't have helped it."

"What did you do about it?"

"Well, I wasn't sore at first: it struck me sort of funny. But he got so fresh after a while that it was sickening. I put on my scowl and says: 'Look here, Mr. Freshman, are you trying to be funny, or do you mean all this stuff you're talking?' He swelled up some more and said he meant it all right. 'All right,' says I, 'I think you and me'll go for a little stroll together.' I guess the rest of 'em were looking for a fight then, but there wasn't any. He went along out with me without making any fuss at all. Well, the stroll we took was quite some stroll, let me inform you. He didn't have the nerve to scrap or I'd have licked him. I was just mad enough to wish he would. He did everything I told him to, but he did it in the nastiest way he could think of, and sassed me till it was all I could do to keep from punching his head."

"That's what I'd have done," interposed Hawkins gruffly.

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“Well, I knew that was against the principles of Mr. Chanler, here, and besides I was afraid that was just what he was looking for—he seemed just like the sort of a mutt that would get a man to hit him and then run and tattle about it to the faculty. So I just kept him on the jump till I was pretty near dead myself. It got to be twelve o’clock. I’d been making him climb telegraph poles, and bark at the moon, and sing, and jump ditches, and he did every blooming thing, but he stayed just as fresh as ever. Finally I decided to take him down to the river. I was rippin’ mad clear through, and I thought he’d show fight at that. I knew if he’d fight I could take it out of him all right. I told him I was going to duck him, and I think I could have done it at that—he’s as big as I am, but he hasn’t any more backbone than a caterpillar. He went along without kicking a bit. I kept remarking how nice and cool the water would be and how nice and far from home we were, and he just grinned a sickly grin and tried to be sarcastic. He wasn’t very strong for my little scheme, but he couldn’t get up his nerve to call a halt, so we kept on.”

“You’re a persevering customer,” said Hawkins as McCarthy got up to toss the butt of his cigarette out the window. “I can’t see myself prowling around the country in the dark for any freshman living.”

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"The moon came up about half past eleven and we could see well enough. Finally we got across the fields and down to the river—that wide, shallow part just before you come to the pool where we tried to go swimming last spring. He stopped on the bank and looked at me with that sickly grin, and says, 'Well, go ahead and duck me.' That was calling my bluff pretty strong, and I grabbed hold of his arm, when he gave a quick sort of a twist and landed me with one foot in the water."

"Thus wetting one leg up to the knee, as Billiam has observed," interpolated Chanler.

"While I was getting out he beat it, and I was fool enough to chase him. And I didn't get him." McCarthy looked around the company with a rueful twist on his freckled face.

"Rather fresh, wasn't he?" remarked Durham gravely.

"He certainly gave me a run before he finally dodged me. I don't know how many miles away it landed me, but it was quarter to five when I got back to the house. I was so dead to the world I just passed away on the couch without taking my clothes off."

"Bill gave the outline of those doings pretty well, I should say," said Durham. "You can't call that nothing but imagination, Husky."

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"What made you rush out in such a hurry this morning?" asked Bill.

"I began to think of that poor fool wandering around in the woods."

"Oh, he'll find his way back all right. You can't get lost very permanently anywhere around Tresham," said Gray.

"What are you going to do about it? Send out a search party?" questioned Durham.

"He's back already. That's what I got up so blamed early to find out. I didn't oversleep, Bill. You struck it wrong there. I was up before any of you were, I bet, and it wasn't Butt I was looking for. It was that fellow Nichols, and I found him all right!"

"Where was he?"

"Up in his room. He'd routed out a lot of freshmen, and there he was, holding forth on how he'd fooled the sophomores, just like last night. The reason I wasn't at chapel was because I stopped to have a little talk with him."

"I don't see where your night's work did very much good," said Hawkins. "Hadn't he calmed down at all?"

"Not a bit. I tried to reason with him, *à la* Butt, and he just sat there and grinned. Finally he did get ugly, and began to make threats."

"Is he going to tell?" demanded Butt.

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"No, they weren't those kind of threats. He just told me I'd gone too far and I'd be sorry. He said he wasn't going to make any trouble with the faculty or anything like that. He was going to follow my own methods, and I needn't think I could skin out of it, because I couldn't."

"What did he mean?"

"You've got me. I don't know. That's what I wanted to see you about."

"Oh, he was just hot-airing!" exclaimed Hawkins. "I should think you'd heard enough of his talk to know that."

"That's what I thought, but this was different. He didn't blow so hard about it, for one thing. He got real quiet and serious, and mad, the way he didn't get all last night, and said that no sophomore would ever try that kind of hazing again. He said it was hard luck that I should be the victim, but I'd brought it on myself, and there wasn't any use trying to dodge it, for I couldn't. The whole sophomore class can't save me, he says."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Butt. "He was stringing you."

"Maybe he was, but it's a different kind of stringing than I ever ran up against before."

"He's got you scared!"

Strangely enough, McCarthy did not go up in the air at this accusation.

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"No, he hasn't," he answered seriously. "But he's got me guessing. He was so quiet and cocksure about it. I want to know what's up!"

"Maybe he's going to throw a bomb at you," suggested Durham.

"No; but he's really got some kind of a game on. After I'd left his room I hung around and watched. He went out and waited outside the chapel till the fellows came out, and then he nabbed a couple of them and they went off whispering. When they saw me following, they broke up—and then I came down here."

"They can't do anything to you," said Butt.

"Of course they can't. I'm not worrying about that. But I don't like to be puzzled so!" McCarthy scowled at the floor, deep in thought.

Suddenly his face lighted.

"I know! Bill!"

"What about me?" asked Bill.

"You can find out," cried McCarthy.

Bill laughed.

"That's in a different line," he said. "I'm no good at finding out that sort of thing."

"But listen! The fellows here don't know you yet—the freshmen especially. You can pass yourself off as a freshman and get in with 'em, and find out the whole business."

Bill laughed again.

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"I don't think that would work," he said.

"Of course it would! You fooled us last night. Why can't you do the same with a lot of freshmen?"

"You could, Bill," put in Hawkins. "Why don't you?"

"I think you're making a lot of fuss over nothing at all," protested Butt. "What's the use of dragging Bill into it?"

"Now don't you go to butting in! I know there is something! Won't you do it, Bill—at least, try it?"

"I don't mind trying it, but don't blame me if you're blown up or something like that before I find out."

McCarthy grinned.

"I'll risk it. You know, Bill, I think you're pretty good, and I wouldn't say that unless I meant it."

"Doesn't that mean the end of the hour?" asked Bill suddenly, listening to the sound of a bell ringing. "By golly! I'll miss my first recitation if I don't look out. I'll see you fellows later—stay here if you want to, but I've got to run."

He was out of the room and down the stairs before the bell stopped ringing, and when the rest of them had reached the sidewalk, he was already breasting the top of the campus hill.

CHAPTER III

TRAILING A FRESHMAN

BILL was to meet Chanler after lunch at the Glee Club trials, which were to be held in the small chapel early in the afternoon, and there report what he had learned about the Nichols conspiracy. Durham had stolen a covert glance at Butt and Hawkins had openly stared when Bill announced that he was going out for the Glee Club, though they made no comment. When he had left them, however, Hawkins said that he felt it would be nothing less than kindness to tell him gently but firmly that any attempt to do anything with such a voice as his was a sheer waste of time. Butt merely smiled. He was inclined to think that Bill could look out for himself, and he had his own worries when it came to trials. Butt had not gone in for musical glory the year before, but this year he was trying for both the Glee and Mandolin Clubs, hoping that his being able to double up and save them an extra man might make up for the fact that he wasn't very much of a singer and only a fair mandolin player.

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They both showed up for the trials early. There were fifteen or twenty men, mostly freshmen, already waiting, and an upperclassman was playing rag-time on the rattly old piano, while a sober-faced senior danced a double-shuffle by himself in the corner.

Bill was standing by the window when Butt came up to him.

"We'd better not be seen talking together," Bill said, lowering his voice. "I can't keep up this freshman pose very long anyway, and some one would be sure to wonder if they saw me talking to you. They all know you, you know."

"All right—I'll manage to see you somehow before we get through," and Butt strolled over to the piano.

Presently Tod Smith, the leader of the club, arrived in company with a Kappa Chi senior whom Bill had already met at the house—a big, rosy-faced blond, who had signed himself "F. E. Colchester" when he first came to college and then immediately changed it to "Franklin Eugene" because they began at once to call him "Effie." But the nickname had stuck, in spite of his six feet and two hundred and odd pounds and the deep voice that made him a tower of strength on the second bass part of the Glee Club.

"Hello, Bill! Going to join the songbirds?" he stopped to question as he passed. "What part?"

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"Tenor, I guess. Any chance?"

"Every chance, if you're first tenor. The part's pretty weak."

The leader rapped sharply on the piano rack to call attention.

"You'll draw lots for trials," he announced, taking a handful of paper slips from his pocket, "and then wait outside. Please be right ready when your turn comes: we want to run 'em off as fast as we can."

There was a scramble for the numbered paper slips and then a general exodus into the hall outside. Bill had drawn Number 3, so he waited by the door. Butt stopped at his side for an instant as he passed, holding up his slip so that the number "15" showed, and then went on into the big chapel, with a meaning glance over his shoulder as the door closed behind him.

"Have you ever tried for the club before?" politely asked a freshman behind Bill, combining in his question a natural opening to conversation and a feeler as to what class Bill belonged to.

"No: this is my first year here."

The freshman's face lighted with fellow feeling. "Say," and his tone was decidedly less formal, "what do they do at these trials anyway? I suppose it's foolish, but I've got sort of an attack of stage-fright."

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The question was partially answered from the room where the first trial had just begun: a nervous and shaky voice was mounting uncertainly up the scale, to break dismally on a high note.

"I guess he has stage-fright, too," Bill replied. "I suppose they make allowances for that, but really there isn't much to be scared of. They just want you to show whether you can sing or not. If you can you're what they're looking for, and you're all right."

The freshman looked dubious.

"I'm afraid I'm not much of a singer when it comes to scales and fancy business. They made short work of him," he added, as the door opened and the first victim came out, a sheepish grin on his face.

The second man was not long in following, and it came Bill's turn. Colchester sat at the piano as he entered, with Tod Smith standing close by, taking notes.

"What part?" Smith asked shortly.

"Tenor."

Smith turned his back and walked over to the other side of the room, apparently leaving all further proceedings to Colchester, who began striking a few mechanical chords on the piano.

"Try singing up the scale," he said, fixing his eyes in a far-away look on the ceiling.

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Though his voice was light, Bill really could sing. As he went confidently up the scale Colchester's gaze left the ceiling and rested on the singer. He went up and up, and Tod Smith came hurrying back from across the room.

"Whoever told you he couldn't sing, Effie?" he demanded. "What was that top note he struck?"

"B. Can you go higher?" Colchester asked, still looking at Bill.

"Sometimes; but I'm usually afraid of busting something."

"Well, B's high enough for all practical purposes," Tod Smith remarked, jotting down something in his notes. "Can you read music?"

"After a fashion."

"Ever sing much?"

"I sang on our Glee Club for a while last year."

"Say, Bill, are you a joker?" put in Colchester slowly.

"Why, no, I don't think so. Why?" Bill looked puzzled at the sudden turn the questioning had taken.

"You've been stringing young Hawkins good and proper, anyway. Hawkins came tumbling into my room this morning to get me to try you out privately—he has a kind heart, you know, and he wanted to spare you the shame of a public down-

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fall, and that sort of thing. He said you couldn't sing any more than Bull Durham can, and that's putting it about as strong as possible."

"And Effie was just begging me to let you down gently when you came in," added Smith.

Bill threw back his head and laughed.

"I don't blame Hawkins much, but I thought he knew. They took me for a freshman last night and tried hazing me a while, and Hawkins told me to sing. You know they'd rather have a freshman sing rottenly than any other way—it's funnier. So I tried to please them."

"Well, you tell Hawkins you've been given a second trial: that ought to set him wondering some," said Smith. "You'll get an announcement about when the second trials come off. Will you ask the next man to come in?"

Colchester gave Bill a discreet wink as he turned toward the door.

The freshman who had been feeling symptoms of stage-fright was now fast in the clutches of it, and apparently readier to run away than to obey Smith's summons.

"Nothing to be afraid of," Bill assured him. "Holler right out at 'em."

The freshman gave a final screw to his courage and bolted through the door, while Bill strolled nonchalantly into the big chapel. As the door closed

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behind him Butt's head bobbed up from behind one of the front seats.

"Better duck down out of sight: some one may look in," he cautioned. "How'd you come out?"

"They're going to give me a second trial," answered Bill, curling himself up on the seat beside him.

"Good work! I had a hunch that wasn't a real specimen of your singing you were giving us last night. But say, Bill, how about it—this racket of Mac's, I mean? I've been thinking about it while I've been waiting here, and I've pretty near made up my mind it's all nonsense. This conspiracy business and meeting in secret and everything seems to me like a lot of foolishness. What did you find out this morning?"

"I didn't find out anything really. I butted gently into a bunch of three fellows this man Nichols was talking with, and sort of made myself at home with them. I made them think I was a freshman all right, but they didn't say anything that was worth listening to. I got friendly enough so they would have talked right out, I think, but we were outdoors, and that may have made a difference. If there's really anything up they naturally wouldn't have talked about it there anyway."

"Couldn't you stick with them till they got somewhere where they could talk?"

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"I tried to; the whole bunch went into the Dorms, and I trotted along with them. They stuck together and made for one of the rooms on the third floor and I thought from that that perhaps they really had something to talk over. But we ran into Freshman Burnet in the hall, and I ducked. He'd probably have remembered that automobile party I had up in his room last night, and there wasn't any use trying to pass as a classmate with him."

Butt smiled.

"No: I should say not. Bunny Burnet comes from the same town I do and I know him pretty well. He's a rather wise youth in his way."

"Well, I didn't take any chances, so I don't know any more than I did before I started out."

"I imagine you know about all there is to know at that. Mac has a habit of going up in the air once in a while, and you get him started and he'll think up more crazy things in five minutes than you and I could in a week. Let's tell him the whole thing's rubbish!"

"Let's wait till to-night. I want to tackle that man Nichols again. I haven't had a fair shot at him yet. Perhaps I can really settle things this afternoon if that wise freshman of yours doesn't come along and scare me off."

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Butt still thought it was all rubbish, but he assented.

"All right, if you want to, but I think it's a waste of time. Perhaps I can get hold of Bunny Burnet and keep him occupied for a while."

"I wish you would. When I'm sleuthing, I want to sleuth without any interruptions. When do you think you can get the coast clear?"

"I don't know. I'll see how many men there are ahead of me now. I may have time to hunt him up before my turn comes. But I don't want to miss warbling for Tod Smith: it may be the last chance I'll ever have."

"They won't get to you for half an hour yet. They spend at least five minutes with each man and they didn't start till after half past one: you're Number 15, and that makes it twenty minutes of three before they'll get to you, at the earliest."

"Great head you've got for mathematics, Bill! Let's beat it then. I'll go first and you can stroll along afterwards. Do you suppose we're fooling anybody by all these precautions?" Butt stood up and shook himself.

Bill laughed as he got to his feet.

"Probably not, but probably nobody's paying any attention to us. But what's the harm?"

"Well, you keep watch, and if all goes well,

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you'll see Freshman Burnet led forth very shortly," and Butt hurried out.

The flock of would-be songsters had thinned perceptibly when Bill at length ventured into the hall. The upperclassmen among them had gone outdoors to wait, where they had captured a freshman who had been carelessly straying about the campus, and compelled him to do stunts for their amusement. Bill saw what was going on and went out by a side door. He did not care about playing the part of a first-year man to the extent of offering himself as another victim. He kept carefully out of sight, and finally took up his station in the lower hall of South College, where Burnet roomed. He had been there only a few minutes when Butt came down the stairs.

"I guess you'll find the coast clear now," he said. "Bunny's got a recitation this hour. The hour's nearly up, but if I see him I'll steer him away."

"Thanks." Bill mounted the stairs and sought the room where Nichols and his crowd had gone in the morning. He was just about to enter when the door opened and McCarthy came out. McCarthy stopped abruptly, drawing the door to behind him.

"Did you find out anything?" he whispered, taking Bill by the arm and leading him down the hall.

"No: I'm just hitting the warpath again. Is your man in there?"

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"No, there's no one there but a freshman named Robertson, but he's one of the gang. I've just been in giving him a little fatherly advice."

"Then perhaps I'd better drop in and offer him a little brotherly sympathy. It ought to go pretty well after your paternal business."

"Sure, go ahead. And nose around, Bill! There's something up. I know it, and you can find out what it is if anyone can."

"Oh, I'll nose around, but really, Mac, don't you think there's a chance you've struck a wrong hunch?"

"Wrong hunch! No, sir! Not this time! Why, I tell you——"

"We'd better not be talking about it here: some of the conspirators might come along, and you may be right anyway. Only it doesn't look like freshmen to lay plots for getting even with sophomores: they wouldn't know what to do even if they thought of it. Besides, if they know anything at all, they must know they're sure to get the worst of it."

"That may all be, but you take it from me, that fellow Nichols has something up his sleeve."

"All right. I'll try to find out what it is. What's this fellow's name in here—Robertson?"

"Yes. And you'll find him good and sore unless he's got over it."

"I'll comfort him, then. So long."

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Robertson was good and sore, for a fact. Bill found him red and sulky, and ready to pour forth his grievances into the first willing ear. Bill gave him the cue at once.

"Hello, Bob," he said genially, trusting his friendly tone to make amends if he struck the wrong nickname. "Been having a visitor? Wasn't that a sophomore I just met in the hall?"

"*Sophomore?*" Robertson's tone spoke wrath. "That was the fellow that took Nichols out last night."

"Oh!" Bill's exclamation was full of sympathetic interest and the desire to hear more.

"I suppose it's up to a freshman to stand a reasonable amount of hazing and get what fun he can out of it. But there's a limit, and that man McCarthy has just about reached it with me."

"Was that McCarthy who was just in here?" Bill saw that Robertson was too wrought up to be hospitable, so he helped himself to a chair.

"Yes; he was here for ten minutes, jawing me about how fresh Nichols is and how I'd better not travel around with him too much if I don't want to queer myself. I knew Nichols had a good right to be sore at him, but I figured it out it was none of my business. But I've changed my mind now. It's my business and every other freshman's, and I'll

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stick by Nick now if it gets the whole sophomore class down on me."

"We certainly ought to stick by Nick," Bill murmured, feeling that he was called upon to express some sort of approbation.

"We'll do it, too!" Robertson stood up and thumped the table with his fist. "They think we freshmen are green and afraid, and can't work together, but we'll show 'em! I tell you my blood's up, and I'll see this thing through if it gets the whole sophomore class down on me!" Robertson's fire rather died out as he realized he was repeating himself. "I'll do it if I get expelled from college for it!" he added, his voice rising as he hit upon the new climax.

"Er—you don't think there's any chance of that, do you?" Bill asked, after the pause of appreciation that Robertson's courageous spirit plainly called for.

"Well, no. But it's just like McCarthy to make trouble. Nick says McCarthy will be so ashamed that he'll take good care it never leaks out through him, but I'm not so sure."

"When do you expect it to come off?" Bill felt that it was time he was learning something definite about what "it" was. Evidently Mac wasn't so far off in his suspicions after all.

Robertson looked at him sharply.

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"Oh, Lord!" thought Bill. "I've put my foot in it now."

"Weren't you up here this morning?" Robertson asked with a perceptible cooling in his tone.

"I had to leave before we'd got very far. To tell the truth, Bob, I don't know much about what the plans are. I don't want to be butting in, but I can't help being interested. Of course, if you feel you can't trust me, I'm sorry, and I suppose we'll have to let it go at that." Bill stood up, a look of mingled apology and regret on his face. "I can honestly say, though, I don't know enough about what's doing so that you need to be afraid I can give anything away."

His tone, as much as his words, probably, had a reassuring effect, for Robertson thawed immediately.

"That's all right: I'm sorry I spoke as I did. But Nick picked his crowd, and he said we weren't to tell anybody else a thing about it. I was under the impression you were here this morning. I certainly remember your coming up the stairs with us. But all of a sudden I happened to think I didn't know your name."

"My name's Bill."

"Sure, I ought to have remembered," but Robertson's tone told plainly that he didn't remember even yet, though he politely pretended to. "Well,

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it all depends on chance a good deal. If we're lucky——”

He stopped short, for the chapel clock had begun to strike.

“Three o'clock. Nick will be up here in a few minutes and he'll tell you how things are to go. He's probably made some changes since this morning.”

Bill acquiesced with outward serenity and some inward uneasiness. Robertson was evidently going to be more cautious henceforth, feeling, no doubt, that he had let his indignation against McCarthy make him too outspoken. As a matter of fact, Robertson felt that Bill was all right, and was perfectly willing to take him completely into his confidence, but Nichols had been very explicit in demanding secrecy, and perhaps it was just as well to wait.

Bill awaited Nichols's coming with a good deal of curiosity. Even if he succeeded in learning nothing more, the mere certainty that something was really afoot was enough to keep the sophomores from being led into anything very dreadful. But Bill wanted more definite information. Whatever plan was being concocted was evidently to be directed against McCarthy, rather than against the sophomore class, and that gave it a personal interest that made him anxious to know as much about it as he could. He liked McCarthy. So he sat waiting, and

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wondered meanwhile how much more juggling with fact he would have to do before he was done.

Nichols was not long in coming, and he brought two others with him. Bill had picked up a magazine that lay on Robertson's desk and was busy looking at it, but he nodded to them as they came in, keeping his seat serenely, as though his being there was quite a matter of course. Without appearing to do so, he saw Nichols look at him sharply and then exchange glances with Robertson. Robertson beckoned Nichols over to the window, and Bill could even get the drift of what passed between them.

"He's all right. His name's Bill. I don't know his last name," he heard Robertson whisper earnestly. "He's as strong against McCarthy as any of us."

"Does he know all about it?" and from the corner of his eye Bill could see that Nichols was looking him over.

"No: he just knows there is something; that's all. Let's let him in on it!"

"Oh, I suppose he's all right. I wanted one more man anyway. I asked that fellow Rowson, upstairs, to come around—he's pretty sore at the sophomores, but one extra won't do any harm."

Nichols came over and leaned against the table beside Bill, and Bill, taking that as a prelude to conversation, laid down his magazine and looked up at him. This rebellious freshman was not especially

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prepossessing to look at, certainly. He was inclined to fatness, a lazy, flabby fat, and his face seemed to be continually perspiring. He had an unpleasant mouth, and his eyes certainly gave some ground for McCarthy's adjective—shifty.

"So you want to come in on this McCarthy deal?" he remarked with a rather heavy attempt at friendliness.

"Sure."

"Why? Do you know him?"

"Well, I haven't had any trouble with McCarthy myself, but I'd like to be in on this. I should think it would be pretty good fun."

"I guess it will—but not for him," and Nichols smiled widely. "The fact is, we're just picking him out as an example. The whole thing's a matter of principle. This hazing business isn't right. A little of it may do very well in a way, but, after all, it isn't right, and sophomores carry it too far. McCarthy's a good example because he's one of the worst ones at it. I say they'll cut it out if the freshmen really put up an opposition. The trouble is, freshmen have stood for it so long they think they've always got to."

"So this is going to be a sort of revolution," remarked Bill thoughtfully.

"That's putting it rather big, but I think it will open people's eyes a little. There are only half a dozen of us—you make seven. We're all here now

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but Rowson and Burnet, and they'll be here in a minute or two, and then we'll talk the whole thing over. I haven't got the plans all worked out yet, but I have pretty nearly. We want to pull the thing off to-night if we can, because to-morrow night's the flag rush and I suppose we'll all be pretty well tired out after that."

Burnet! That man was bobbing up everywhere. Bill seemed fated not to escape him. And he was coming in a few minutes to take part in this council of war! Bill was half minded to beat a retreat immediately, but his curiosity to know more details got the better of him. If Butt did his duty, it would be considerably more than a few minutes before Freshman Burnet would be free to do any plotting.

"What's your idea?" he asked, hoping to get some general scheme of things before the real council began. Then if it were necessary he could flee before Burnet had a chance to spot him.

"We're going to give McCarthy some of his own medicine—haze him good and proper, until he squeals for help. When we get through with him I rather imagine he'll let freshmen alone. We——"

The door opened suddenly and Bill turned around with a start. But it was Rowson who came in, and alone. He was panting and he slammed the door quickly behind him and turned the key in the lock. They all stared at him in amazement.

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"What's the matter?" demanded Nichols.

"Chanler's got a lot of sophomores together and they're having a hazing party down back of the chapel. They catch the fellows coming up from recitations and keep them there doing stunts. I think they got Burnet, but I ran and got away." He stopped to catch his breath, leaning against the door.

"It won't do any good to lock the door," declared Robertson, going over and turning the key again. "If they come looking for anybody they'll know we're here just the minute they find the door locked, and then they'll smash it down if we don't let 'em in."

"We can go into the bedroom," said Nichols. "They won't be likely to look in there. I guess we'd better not wait any longer for Burnet. If he gets away he ought to know where to find us."

Bill almost smiled with satisfaction. Butt was doing his duty, and all was well.

Robertson's was one of the few rooms in the Dorms with a small sleeping room adjoining. Into this they now trooped, closing the door behind them. Bill curled himself up on the farthest corner of the bed, and the others arranged themselves where they could. As befitted the leader, Nichols kept the floor.

"I'm sorry Burnet isn't here, because he's pretty good at planning," he began, "but I guess we can get along. The first thing we want to do

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is to get hold of McCarthy. That oughtn't to be so very hard, because he's sure to be around the Dorms somewhere, but the trouble will be to catch him alone. He thinks this is my room here, because he found me here last night, so he told me to be here, sure, at nine o'clock. But he'll have somebody with him."

"Don't you room in the Dorms?" asked Bill.

"No, I've got a room uptown."

"Why not let him go there for you? There wouldn't be so many around," suggested Robertson.

"That would be all right if he were coming around alone, but I don't think he is. He tried to manage me alone last night, and I don't think he'll try it again."

A smile flickered over Bill's face, safely concealed behind Robertson's back.

"I don't see how we're going to make any definite plans when we don't know how many people he's going to have with him," objected Rowson querulously.

"I have an idea," suggested Bill. It had been striking him more and more strongly that this wasn't a very brave lot of conspirators after all. With the exception of Robertson and Burnet, who, according to Butt, was all right, they seemed to be nothing more than a bunch of sore-heads, without the ability to lay a real plan or the courage to carry it out.

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For an instant he was tempted to reveal what he was, express his disgust with them and tell them they were a lot of silly fools. But he decided that that would be letting Nichols off too easily.

"Let's have it then," said Nichols shortly.

"You know I room in a private house myself—Mrs. Sleeper's, the little brown house just across the street down the hill. McCarthy was going to have some fun with me last night, but I skipped away from him, and I have an idea he'll be around to see me to-night. I don't imagine he's afraid of me, and I shouldn't wonder if he came alone."

"Just the thing: we'll all be there!" exclaimed Nichols.

"No!—my landlady wouldn't stand for any rumpus in the house. But you can be outside and get him when he comes out."

"But suppose he brings some one with him?" asked Rowson.

"He won't bring the whole class with him," put in Robertson. "I guess with seven of us we can manage two or three extra ones—half a dozen, if necessary. We're a lot of poor sticks if we can't."

"S-sh! Some one's coming!" interrupted Rowson.

Nichols opened the door a crack and peered into the study.

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"Oh, it's you, is it? Come on in. It's Burnet," he added in explanation.

Bill crouched farther back in his corner, doing his best to hide behind Robertson.

"Well, what's the scheme?" asked Burnet, closing the door behind him.

"We've got it all fixed up," began Nichols enthusiastically. "Bill is going to have him down at his room and——"

"Bill? Bill who?"

"That Bill over there. McCarthy's going down to his room, and we're all going to be waiting outside and nab him when he comes out. Then we'll take him in hand and give him what's coming to him. We won't need any plan for that: all we want is to get hold of him."

It was no use trying to hide any longer. Bill knew that Burnet had moved so as to get a look at him, and all the time Nichols was speaking he knew it was only a question of seconds before the cat was hopelessly out of the bag. He was right. The last word was hardly out of Nichols's mouth when Burnet spoke.

"You are a prize lot!" he cried. "Don't you know one of your own class when you see him?" From where he was lying Bill could not see Burnet, but he could see Nichols and a sudden startled expression that came over his face. "Here you

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are plotting against a sophomore," Burnet went on, "with one of them right——"

He got no farther. With a heavy lunge that sent a pile of books clattering to the floor, Nichols bolted for the door.

"They're coming! They mustn't see us together!" he cried, running through the study. The others followed, startled and wondering, Bill last of all. When he reached the hall Burnet was the only one in sight.

"There's no one here!" Burnet exclaimed. "I wonder why he did that?"

"I wonder," Bill echoed. And he really did.

CHAPTER IV

THE OUTCOME

FORTUNE, in the shape of Nichols, had unaccountably saved Bill from disclosure for the time being, and he saw no reason to think that the freshmen who had been in Robertson's room were suspicious of him. But it was no fault of Burnet's that the whole business was not hopelessly spoiled, and Bill knew that Nichols's sudden breaking up of the meeting had only postponed revelations till Burnet should have another chance to talk with his fellow-conspirators.

They stood in the empty hall, the freshman and the sophomore, looking at each other and wondering. Bill was inclined to be amused, but Burnet saw nothing but the utmost seriousness in the turn things had taken.

"If you don't mind, I wish you'd take a little walk with me," said Bill, smiling.

"Where to?" Burnet's tone was a shade suspicious.

"Oh, anywhere. Down to my room, perhaps. We might as well go there as anywhere."

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"You want to get me out of the way, so I won't tell those fellows what I started to, don't you?"

"Yes—incidentally. But more than that, I want to have a little talk with you."

"We can talk up in my room."

"I know, but we might be interrupted. I wish you'd do as I ask! I'm not talking to you now as a sophomore to a freshman. I understand you've pledged Kappa Chi. That's my fraternity, too—I guess you knew it. You and I ought to be good friends, then, and it's on that basis I want to talk with you. If there is any need to order you around as a freshman, some one else will have to do it."

"All right, I'll come," and they started down the stairs. Burnet did not say a word all the way to Mrs. Sleeper's, but there was plainly something on his mind. Once he even opened his mouth to speak, and then thought better of it. But they were hardly in Bill's room before he blurted it out.

"What are you mixed up in this thing for?" he asked.

"That's the very thing I was going to ask you."

"I asked first."

"All right. McCarthy got wind that Nichols had some kind of a scheme on, though he didn't know he was going to figure so prominently in it himself, and he asked me if I couldn't find out what

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it was. It was easier for me to do it because I'm a new man and there was a chance that I could pass myself off for a freshman without being found out. I did it for the fun of the thing at first, but I'm interested now, and I'm going to see it through."

"Do you think you're acting fair?"

"Of course! You know that old chestnut about everything's being fair in war—and when freshmen rebel against the divine right of sophomores I think you can call it war."

"I suppose you call that class spirit!"

"In a way, though I haven't got a great deal of class spirit yet—not the real thing. You see, I've only been a member of this class for about a day."

"Is it because you're a friend of McCarthy's?"

"More or less. I don't know McCarthy very well, but I like him. Still, that isn't all. But haven't you been cross-examining me long enough for a while? You might tell me why you're in it—and you might as well sit down as stand up."

Bill threw himself on the couch, but Burnet remained standing.

"I'm in it because McCarthy hasn't acted right," he cried. "He's mean and he's a coward!"

"What has he done to you?"

"Nothing. But that's only because he happened to pick out somebody else. Nobody but a mean coward would do what he did to Nichols last night."

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Bill grinned.

"But I thought Nichols rather got the best of it. That's what he says, anyway."

"Oh, I know Nick is a sort of a blower, and he likes to hear himself talk. But you ought to have seen him when he got back this morning."

"You ought to have seen McCarthy, for that matter. Is Nichols a special friend of yours?"

"No: it's just the principle of the thing."

"Then you're acting out of class spirit, too."

"Yes—and college spirit. It's a disgrace to Tresham College to have things happening like what happened last night! A man like McCarthy ought to be taught a lesson."

"If you lived in Russia you'd be an anarchist, Burnet," Bill remarked, going over to his desk for his pipe, which he proceeded to fill and light as he talked. "Well! When you get to talking about principles, I don't know. As a matter of fact, I can't see such an awful lot of use in hazing anyway. Sometimes it's funny, and once in a while it puts a damper on a man that's too fresh. But I don't see that it does an awful lot of harm either. That Nichols business last night was a little more strenuous than usual, perhaps, but he wasn't obliged to stand for it. I think you're wrong when you say McCarthy's mean and a coward. I haven't seen anything of that sort in him at all. All you know

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about him is what you've heard from Nichols, and you must admit that Nichols is prejudiced. And I can see without any trouble at all just how Nichols made McCarthy feel."

"How's that?"

"He was nasty. That doesn't go with McCarthy, you know. Mac's an Irishman, and he's got an Irishman's temper. If Nichols had acted like other freshmen he'd have been all right. That's one thing I don't understand about Nichols—why he didn't act like other freshmen. Because he hasn't got an ounce of nerve. I watched him a good deal this afternoon, and I sized him up as a big, sneaky coward. He's sore because McCarthy did get the best of him last night, in spite of all his big talk, and because he has a nasty disposition he wants to get even. He doesn't dare try to do it alone, so he gets half a dozen other sore-heads to help him out, and tries to get his man in the dark, with every odd in his own favor."

Burnet merely shrugged.

"That's why I don't understand why you're having anything to do with it," Bill went on. "I don't think it's like you. I do understand, though, in a way. You think it's a matter of principle, and that Nichols is in the right. That's the way Robertson feels about it, too, I imagine. But the rest of them—that Rowson is just a sniveling little 'fraid-cat,

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and the other two—I don't even know their names—are nothing but a couple of weaklings that a man like Nichols can wind right 'round his finger. They'd follow me just as quick if I threw a lot of big talk at them. They just sat around this afternoon without saying a word and listened to the one that made the biggest noise. When you get mixed up with people like that I don't think the principle pulls so strong. As far as this thing goes, the principle doesn't amount to a rap. It's just something Nichols has used to rope in you and Robertson. He had the sense to want two decent men in his crowd anyway, and that's the way he took to get them. But if you stick by him, you'll see I'm right about him and his principles. I'm willing to bet on that."

Still Burnet did not speak. He just looked at Bill, and whatever he may have been thinking, his face gave no sign. Bill took a last pull at his pipe and knocked the ashes out.

"Why don't you drop it, Burnet? It's sure to leak out, and it's going to do the freshmen that are in it a lot more harm than good."

"Why?"

"Because Nichols is the ring-leader, and because he's the kind of man he is."

Burnet still looked at him thoughtfully.

"What are you going to do?" he asked at length.

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"I don't know exactly, except that I'm going to have Mac down here according to agreement. What happens then will depend on Mac and Chanler and whoever else they choose to have around. I imagine Mr. Nichols won't indulge in any more rebellion right away."

Burnet straightened up and threw back his head, as if he had come to a decision.

"You may be right about Nichols—I hadn't thought that way, but I can see why you do. I'll tell you what I'll do. If you'll drop out of the thing right now, I will."

"Why not anyway? I oughtn't to make any difference."

"Well, Nichols is depending on me. You're on the other side, so if we both drop out that evens things up. Besides, if you don't do anything, their plan won't work, the way they have it fixed now, and they may give up the whole thing."

Bill shook his head.

"No, I have a personal interest now. I want to see Freshman Nichols get what you might call a much-needed lesson—just in the interests of humanity. Of course you can tell them about me. I suppose you will. I shan't try to stop you. But, whether you do or not, and whether this affair to-night comes off or not, I think Nichols has already

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got himself in deep enough so that he'll realize it before he's through."

Burnet hesitated a moment.

"All right," he said. "I guess we'll have to let it go at that," and he left the room.

He went straight to the Dorms, intending to find the conspirators and show them, if he could, that they, perhaps, were not following the way of wisdom. What Bill had said had shown him a somewhat different point of view. But the conspirators were strangely elusive. Robertson was not in his room, nor was Rowson, nor the two others. He did not know where Nichols roomed, so he could not look there. At supper-time he gave up the search, puzzled and wondering.

He would have wondered still more if he could have known that immediately after he and Bill had left the Dorms Nichols had got the other four together again—he looked for Bill, too, but Bill had disappeared—and told them they had better leave Burnet out of all further plans. His reasons were rather vague. It seemed that he had discovered Burnet could not be wholly trusted or something like that, and he urged his followers to keep out of Burnet's way till the whole business was over. They were somewhat mystified at this sudden change, but the time was short and it was not difficult to do as Nichols wished. They spent the rest of the after-

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noon and the early part of the evening in Nichols's room uptown.

Bill, after Burnet had gone, propped himself up on his couch so he could look out of the window, filled his pipe again, and lay there, smoking and gazing off at the western hills. He expected Butt or Mac would drop in before long to hear his report.

Well, he had found out what they wanted to know, and it had been fun in a way. But the whole thing was pretty trivial, he reflected, a mean-spirited man seeking a petty revenge in a cheap, melodramatic way. It seemed more like an episode from one of the Frank Merriwell tales he used to read in his boyhood than the doings of real people in a real college. He was almost inclined to hunt up Nichols and tell him he was a fool, and that the only sensible thing for him to do was to swallow his grievances if he had any, and let bygones alone. But the very fact that Nichols, being the spiritless kind of man he plainly was, should have the audacity to adopt such blood-and-thunder methods, was a puzzle that had interest enough to make Bill decide to let things take their own course. At the worst, it was just a waste of time.

An hour passed, and it was after five o'clock. Neither Butt nor McCarthy had shown up yet, and feeling a desire for company, Bill scrawled a hurried

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note on his desk pad, telling where he had gone, and went over to the Kappa Chi house.

Weird sounds from within assailed his ears even before he reached the door, and he entered the parlor to find Hawkins and Durham seated at the piano, engaged in executing a song called, "Wait till the sun shines, Nelly." Hawkins knew two sets of chords, which he used impartially as an accompaniment to their singing. And the singing! It was plain now what Colchester had been led to expect from Hawkins's warning that Bill was about as much of a singer as Bull Durham.

Gray lay on the window seat, doubled up with laughing. He beckoned Bill to come over beside him, but it was useless to try to speak until the uproar was finished. The two singers kept on, heedless of everything but their song, and ended with a burst of long-drawn-out fervor:

"Wait till the sun shines, Nelly,
By-y a-and by-y."

Hawkins gave a final thump to the keys and swung around on the piano stool.

"Hello, Old Sleuth! Pretty good, eh, what?" he cried. "I guess the Kappa Chi brethren are the original songbirds this year, all right."

Durham grinned placidly.

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"We're going out for the Glee Club, too," he remarked.

"Sure we are. I guess Bull and I have as strong a pull with Tod Smith as you and Butt Chanler have. We can lick him, anyway."

"How did Chanler come out?" asked Bill.

"Shucks, Bill! Call him 'Butt'! We'll kick you out if you go to calling us by our last names around here."

"How did Butt come out, then?" Bill repeated, laughing.

"Oh, they told him he'd get a second trial and it's gone to his head. He's been up in Effie Colchester's room for the last half hour, torturing that poor mandolin of his. He's getting ready for the Mandolin Club trials. Between his playing up there and our singing down here everybody else has been driven out of the house except Tommy. Tommy likes it—he think it's funny."

"Do you suppose Butt would mind if I interrupted him? I want to see him a minute."

"Of course not: come on up. We'll all go up. It's time he had an interruption."

And upstairs they went. From the front room issued the strains of a mandolin, going painstakingly over and over what sounded like a pretty difficult passage.

"That's 'Silver Heels' he's working on. I

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thought you'd like to know," remarked Hawkins, pausing outside the door. "Wait a minute. He'll get to the chorus after a while, and then perhaps you'll recognize it."

They waited, listening, Durham and Hawkins close to the door, their fists raised ready to pound upon it.

"Here she comes. Ready!" Hawkins whispered, and as the mandolin swung into the chorus they lifted up their voices in a loud chant, pounding terrific time on the door-panel:

"Dum dee dee, de-dum dee dee,
Pretty little Silver Heels,
Dum dee dee, de-dum dee dee,
If you will come and cook my meals."

"Oh-h!" screamed Butt from within. "Come in or get out, but for Heaven's sake shut up that racket!"

"A gentleman to see you, Mr. Chanler," announced Hawkins, opening the door and pushing Bill forward. "Remember your manners."

"Oh, hello, Bill!" Butt, flushed from his efforts, put down the mandolin and arose from his chair. "I thought those wild Indians were going to smash in the door. I've been trying to work up this piece for the Mandolin Club trials, but there's a place in the first part that I always trip up on."

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"Be not discouraged, Buttie dear. Your lucky star is with you this day," said Hawkins solemnly. "If you can get by Tod Smith there isn't anything more to be afraid of."

"Did you hear about that, Bill?" Butt fairly beamed. "They're going to give me a second trial on the Glee Club!"

"*Did he hear about that?*" echoed Hawkins and Durham in unison. "Is there anybody in college that hasn't heard about it?" added Hawkins.

"We're going to have an announcement made in chapel to-morrow morning," said Durham. "'Notice is hereby given that the college is relieved of the responsibility of furnishing musical clubs this year, the brothers of the Kappa Chi fraternity having kindly consented to supply all the requisite material.' Husky and I are going to help you and Bill and Effie on the Glee Club, and with you to play 'Silver Heels' and Tommy Gray to be the Banjo Club, I don't see where there's room for anybody else."

"Tommy really can play: he was on the Banjo Club last year," supplemented Butt.

"'Oh, we are a band of gay music-i-ans,'" carolled Hawkins, seizing the mandolin and twanging upon it.

"Here!" Butt rescued his cherished instru-

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ment and put it in its case. "Why weren't you down at football practice to-day? That's the place to work off your exuberant spirits."

"Going out to-morrow, aren't we, Bull? It's too much to expect sophomores to go to football practice when they've had to be out hazing the night before."

"Oh, Bill!" cried Butt, remembering. "How about Mac's conspiracy? Find out anything?"

"Yes. There is one all right. They're going to take Mac out to-night and haze him."

"*Haze* him?" echoed Hawkins. "Who? That fellow he was talking about this morning? Well, what do you know about that?"

"I don't know how it'll come out now. I got in on the plotting and everything was fixed up fine, but Burnet walked in on us. He's one of the plotters."

"Bunny? I thought I had him coralled for a solid hour. I told the fellows not to let him get away no matter what happened."

"He got away though, and caught me red-handed."

"*Did he betr-ray yuh?*" demanded Hawkins in a melodramatic whisper.

"He was just going to, when all of a sudden Nichols gave a whoop and knocked over a pile of books and broke up the meeting. I haven't seen any

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of them since, except Burnet. I took him down to the room and tried to tell him that wasn't any gang for him to be traveling around with. But he's a stubborn child. I suppose he's told them I'm just a spying sophomore by this time."

"Why didn't you gag him and lock him up?"

"What was the use? I don't want any fuss with Burnet, and besides, Nichols and his crowd are willing to furnish all that sort of thing that's necessary."

"What are they going to do?"

"Well, Nichols has got four fellows together—besides Burnet. One of 'em, Robertson, isn't a bad sort at all, but the other three are the limit. Mac sized up Nichols about right. He's a squealer. I told 'em Mac was planning to haze me last night, but I got away from him, which was gospel truth, and that probably he'd pay me a visit to-night. Their scheme is to be waiting outside the house and catch him when he comes out. They count on his coming out alone."

"Well, he won't!" cried Hawkins.

"But don't you see they won't try it now? They know we're on to it. If they do anything at all they'll wait till they think we don't expect it."

"Bull, I see where we don't go out for football till next week!" said Hawkins solemnly. "We've got to put in another night showing freshmen what's

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what, and I shouldn't wonder if it was going to be a strenuous one."

"You won't do anything of the kind," put in Butt. "If Mac hadn't tried that stunt last night there wouldn't have been any trouble at all."

"Now look here, Butt! If that man Nichols couldn't find trouble he'd make it. If he thinks he can try any of his sophomore-hazing games up here and get away with it, he's got another think coming to him. I'm not much on hazing generally, but here's a case where it's necessary, and I'm for giving it to him good and plenty."

"Calm down, Husky! Listen here a minute. You know Prexy is dead against hazing anyway, and if anything happened to give him an excuse he'd put his foot down on it in a minute. I think he's right about it. Oh, I know what you're going to say! But you know it's a nuisance and doesn't do any good even in special cases. But I don't want our class to be the one to give him an excuse. So far, he hasn't had a single kick coming about the way we've done things, and I don't want him to have. I'll have a talk with Nichols and show him the way he's doing is silly and ridiculous, and if he's got any sense at all he'll see it. But we won't have any more night parties."

"Far be it from me to rebel against the president of me class," grumbled Hawkins. "I wish

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you luck. But it's my humble opinion that Freshman Nichols needs a good thrashing."

"Perhaps he does, but it isn't up to us to give it to him. What do you think, Bill?"

"Personally, I'd rather like to see him get the thrashing. There's something about him that I don't like at all. But I suppose you're right."

"There!" cried Hawkins. "Bill's hob-nobbed with him and knows him, and he's for the corporal punishment. I think I'll go along with you, Butt, and if your gentle words can't do anything my strong right arm may come in handy."

"Here, you last year's freshmen! I'd like to use my room a little while, if you don't mind." Colchester stood in the doorway with another senior behind him.

"Oh, Effie, you're a pig!" cried Durham, who had fixed himself comfortably on the window-seat. "Can't you see we're using it? Butt's having a class meeting."

"It looks that way. No, I'm sorry, but I'd really like to have a little class meeting of my own here for a few minutes. Scoot! Oh, hello, Bill!" he added, noticing Bill for the first time. "Here, I want you to meet Mr. Meredith, the president of the senior class and probably one of the most prominent, if not *the* most prominent, men in college. Pardon me, Merry, before a perfect stranger, but I

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do love to get that off. Bill's a new brother of ours from out west—and Bill's his last name, not his first."

While Bill and Meredith were shaking hands Hawkins sidled up to Colchester and put an arm coaxingly about him.

"Please, Effie, can't you get Bull and me a place on the Glee Club, too? We love you just as much as Bill does, and we'll run errands for you and carry your suitcase for you, and lend you clean collars——"

"That'll be about enough from you about Glee Club, my boy! Tod Smith nearly didn't give Bill a trial on the strength of your pleading. Trot along, now. Merry and I have work to do before supper."

"It's most supper time, anyway," said Butt, leading the way into the hall. "We'll have just time to go up to the post office before grub."

On the way uptown Bill was on the lookout for some of the freshmen, who must by this time have been informed of his perfidy by Burnet, and after supper he and Butt strolled up to the Dorms on the same quest. They were looking especially for Nichols, for Butt had a little lecture all ready for that misguided freshman, and later on, at the gathering that is held in College Hall on the first Friday night after college opens to introduce the various undergraduate activities to the new men, they were

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as fully occupied in searching the audience as in listening to the speakers. Everyone was supposed to attend this affair, but Burnet seemed to be the only one of the conspirators present. He was sitting well down toward the front of the hall and they made no effort to get close to him.

Nichols, as we know, had his four followers safely in his room, and there he meant to keep them till time for action. So far as they were aware, everything was still to go off as scheduled, and they intended to keep well out of the way of stray sophomores in the meantime. Robertson, to be sure, chafed somewhat under these precautions, and grumbled at missing the meeting in College Hall, but the others agreed with Nichols, and his counsel prevailed.

At nine o'clock they sallied forth, and by a round-about way came to the hedge that partially enclosed Mrs. Sleeper's yard. Beneath this they could lie completely hidden, while a street lamp some thirty feet away made a circle of light on the sidewalk which gave them a good look at everyone coming from the direction of the college. There they waited, starting up eagerly at every sound of approaching footsteps.

Bill's was the first familiar form to appear in the flare of the street lamp—but he was not alone. His companion turned out to be Chanler. They won-

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dered and whispered about it when the two had passed into the house.

Burnet came next, hurrying, almost running, and they could hear him muttering with impatience because he found the door locked and had to wait for some one to come and let him in. Nichols crouched farther into the hedge shadows, uttering a low "S-sh!" of warning and command. When Burnet was finally admitted, he raised his head cautiously.

"Listen!" he whispered. "Can you hear me? When McCarthy comes we must get him before he goes in. We won't wait till he comes out."

"Why?" demanded Rowson.

"Don't speak so loud!"

"But we want Bill and Burnet to help us!"

"Keep still, will you?" growled Robertson. "If the five of us can't take care of him we'd better sell out. Don't you know Chanler's there, too?"

"S-sh! Some one's coming!" They listened tensely, their eyes fixed on the point where the on-comer would first enter the circle of light. "It's him. Get ready!"

McCarthy it was, fresh from a nap that had lasted a good deal longer than he had intended. His alarm clock, set for six, had failed to awake him, and he might have slept on till morning if his roommate had not roused him to demand the whereabouts of a missing sweater. He came walking

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briskly along, whistling shrilly, and turned in at Mrs. Sleeper's front walk. His foot was just raised to mount the first step when a figure appeared at each side of him, each grasping an arm. He turned sharply, but the hands held tight.

"What's the matter?" he cried angrily.

"We want you," came the short answer.

"Oh, it's you, Nichols, is it? So this is your scheme! Well, what about it?"

"You might as well come along."

"Huh!" McCarthy laughed grimly, tried in vain to wrench himself free, and suddenly relaxed, making himself a dead weight on their hands. "If you're counting on getting me anywhere you'll have to carry me."

"We can do it!" and McCarthy saw other quick-moving figures approach from out of the shadows. He could not count them, but he knew he was outnumbered. With a quick movement he straightened up and shouted: "*Bill ! Bill ! Bill !*" Then an arm was thrown about his head, shutting off his cries.

Upstairs, Bill and Butt were quietly chatting and smoking when Burnet suddenly burst in upon them.

"Hello, Bunny!" exclaimed Butt, looking at the flushed freshman in surprise. "Isn't this pretty

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late for a freshman to be out alone and unprotected? ”

“ Has McCarthy been here yet? ” demanded Burnet.

“ No. What’s the trouble? ”

Burnet sat down and mopped his forehead with his handkerchief.

“ Nothing, now. Only I’ve been thinking over this thing, and the more I think, the foolisher it seems. I tried to find the other fellows and tell them it was nothing to do at all, but they haven’t been in their rooms and they weren’t at the meeting to-night, and somehow everything seemed so muddled up that I got afraid you might not have seen McCarthy and you might not be here when he came down, and then the whole thing would go through just as they planned it.”

“ Then you haven’t had a chance to betray me yet? ” asked Bill with a smile.

“ No: I haven’t seen any of them since they rushed out of Robertson’s room this afternoon.”

“ It looks as though Nichols didn’t want your thrilling news. They’re probably hiding somewhere outside now, but I don’t think they’ll do much to-night. I didn’t see Mac.”

“ You didn’t? ” Burnet started from his chair. “ Then they’ll get him! ”

“ How can they? ” Bill struck a match and

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held it poised between his fingers. "I was going to deliver him into their hands, but I didn't get a chance to invite him down. It's possible——" He paused to apply the match to his pipe, but stopped short in the middle of the first puff. From the front of the house came suddenly Mac's thrice repeated cry. "By golly! They have! Here—you can't see the street from that window—the tree's in the way. Hurry up!" and he dashed out the door and down the stairs. "Oh, thunder!" he cried in exasperation. The hall light had been put out, and in the dark he fumbled in vain at the combination of chain-bolt, ordinary bolt and key with which Mrs. Sleeper safeguarded the entrance to her house at night. Butt and Burnet were already at his back, urging him to hurry. "Light a match, for Heaven's sake!"

A light appeared at the other end of the hall, and Mrs. Sleeper came pattering barefooted toward them, a strange apparition in curl-papers, wrapped in a quilt and bearing a lamp aloft in her hand.

"Mr. Bill! What's the matter? Dear me, what's the matter?"

"Oh, won't you unlock this confounded thing, please? I can't make head nor tail of it!"

"But what's the matter? I heard some one yell—in' bloody murder, and——"



“ ‘Freshman *hazin’* ? I never heard of such a thing ! ’ ”

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“ Please won’t you open the door? ” interrupted Butt.

Mrs. Sleeper drew herself up very straight, looking down at Butt with kindling eyes. Then she deliberately placed the lamp on the hall table and took her stand beside it, drawing the quilt more closely about her and folding her arms resolutely.

“ Mr. Bill! *Mr. Bill!* ” she repeated, for Bill was busy with the door and paid no attention to her first call. He turned impatiently. “ If there’s one thing I pride myself on, it’s treatin’ my boarders right,” she declared impressively. “ Land knows, I don’t have to take in boarders, and I ain’t never done it since Mr. Sleeper passed away. But now that I *have* taken you in, I mean to do as well by you as I know how. I want any boarder of mine should have as nice a time as anybody. But——” She paused, picked up her lamp again as she neared her climax, and drew herself up a little straighter. Bill, held by her stern eye, sighed resignedly, though his hand itched to get at the door again. He had got it nearly unlocked. “ But,” she repeated, “ I’m not going to put up with people comin’ in here to see you and then interruptin’ and insultin’ me! ”

“ Oh, Mrs. Sleeper, I didn’t think of insulting you! ” protested Butt. “ I didn’t mean to interrupt you, but we’re in such an awful hurry—that was

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one of our friends yelling. Some freshmen have got him, and they're going to haze him."

"Freshmen *hazin'*? I never heard of such a thing!" she cried incredulously.

"But they are! They're a mean lot and they may hurt him."

"Did you ever! I always said this *hazin'* had ought to be put a stop to. Here, let me get at that door!" With swift fingers she undid the lock, her wrath all forgotten. "I hope you get 'em and trounce 'em good. Poor boy! If——"

But they were gone, leaving her with her sentence unfinished.

In vain they looked up and down the street and searched around the house. The delay had been enough and McCarthy and his captors had disappeared completely.

The three stopped under the street lamp, looking undecidedly at one another.

"They can't have gone far," said Bill. "They probably had to carry him."

"Here's a chance to do some sleuthing," suggested Butt.

"P-sh! What can I do—at night? That was just showing off this morning. I wish I could, though."

"Don't you know where they were going to take him?"

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"No! I didn't suppose they'd get him, so I didn't try to find out. Don't you know, Burnet?"

"No: they talked a lot of stuff about teaching him a lesson, but I didn't pay much attention to all that. I thought they'd really get down to business this afternoon."

"Well——" Butt started to move along. "We ought to be doing something, but what in thunder can we do?"

"Maybe they weren't all there," suggested Burnet. "I tell you. I'll go up to the Dorms and see if one of 'em isn't there, and find out where the rest were going."

"We'll go along with you," said Butt.

But none of those they were looking for was to be found in the Dorms. Many of the freshmen had gone to bed. It was understood by both classes that hazing was to be generally cut out after the first night—and only in one room did they come upon any sophomores.

"Had I better tell them?" asked Butt as they stood in the doorway. "They might help us hunt."

"I wouldn't. They probably couldn't do any more than we can alone, and I don't imagine Mac would be crazy about having any more people know about it than have to."

"All right." Butt closed the door again. "I

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guess you'd better go to bed, Bunny. There isn't anything you can do."

"I'd like to help," said Burnet in a troubled voice. "You know I sort of feel partly to blame for this. I was going in on it, too."

"Oh, that's all right. I'd get some sleep if I were you. You'll have a good deal to do to-morrow, with the flag-rush and things."

So Burnet said good night and left them.

"Can you think of anything?" asked Butt when he had gone.

"Nothing that'll help Mac. I'm going to wait up in Robertson's room till he gets back."

"All right. If we can't do anything else, we can at least send him to bed with something to think about."

They did not light up in Robertson's room, but sat there in the dark. They expected a rather long wait—it was only a little after ten o'clock—and Butt curled himself up in a big Morris chair to get a short nap. But he had hardly begun to doze when Robertson came in. They did not speak, and he had lighted his desk lamp before he saw that they were there.

"Back early, aren't you?" Bill remarked, rising and going over to the door, where he stood with his back against it, ready to prevent any attempt of Robertson's to leave the room.

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Robertson looked from one to the other, puzzled to find Bill there with a sophomore.

"What are you doing here?" he asked.

"Just waiting for you. We want to hear about it."

Robertson gave a hitch to his shoulder, which was his way of shrugging. "I've washed my hands of it," he said shortly.

"Why?"

"Because I don't like it. There's something queer about that man Nichols. You know the way he ran out of the room this afternoon? Then he suddenly took a notion not to have anything more to do with Burnet—he had us up in his room all the evening so Burnet couldn't find us—and Burnet was the best fellow in the bunch. The rest aren't any good."

"What did you get mixed up in it for, then?"

"Well, McCarthy was disagreeable, and it was the principle of the thing. But they weren't thinking anything about principle; they were just sore, and they wanted somebody to get back at. They thought it was smart, too."

"Where are they now?"

"Down back of the old Gym. But what's the matter with you? You were as strong for it as anybody this afternoon."

Bill gave a little dry cough.

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"I wasn't really. I was just nosing around to find out what was doing. To tell the truth, I—I don't happen to be a freshman. I'm a sophomore."

Robertson stared.

"You lied, then!"

"Perhaps so. But I didn't say I was a freshman. I just tried to act like one."

"Well, I don't care anyhow. I suppose you'll have it in for me now"—he half turned to Butt—"but I don't care much about that either. I'm sick of this scrapping and fooling around. That isn't what I came to college for. But I don't envy Nichols much when McCarthy gets a chance at him."

"What have they been doing to him?"

"Jawing and pounding him. They don't dare let him up. They've got him tied."

"Come on, Bill!" cried Butt.

They ran all the way to the old Gym, Butt in the lead, and as they rounded the corner they caught a glimpse of fleeing figures disappearing around the other side. By the big electric light that illumined that end of the campus they could see another figure lying on the ground and some one standing over him. It was Nichols.

"Why didn't you run, too?" panted Butt, scornfully, running up to him.

Nichols started slightly, and then grinned.

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"Why should I?" he said jauntily. "You can't do anything to me—not even if you get the whole class to back you up."

"I guess we can, and we won't need the whole class to help either." Butt and Bill leaned over and began to unfasten the ropes that tied McCarthy.

"No, you can't," Nichols laughed, as if it were the best of jokes— "Do you know why? Because I happen to be a sophomore, too!"

Butt whirled around on him.

"*What?* You—you——" Words failed him.

"Yes, I am. You can look it up on the registrar's list if you don't believe it. Burnet knows. He tried to tell, but I wasn't ready to have people know yet."

"Then what—what are you doing this for?"

"For the fun of it—and I've had fun, too. You fellows are so smart here, you think anybody can't be new without being a freshman! This man"—indicating McCarthy with his foot—"thought he knew it all. He thought he'd have some fun with me! But I guess he's got his!"

Butt looked at him contemptuously.

"I certainly am proud to have you in my class!" he said witheringly.

McCarthy had succeeded in getting free of his bonds and standing up, though his mouth was still gagged. With an inarticulate roar he rushed at

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Nichols, striking him a straight-armed blow on the chin that laid him flat.

"There!" he panted, flinging off the gag. "Get up, and I'll give you another!"

"Here, Mac!" cried Bill, seizing his arm.

"Let go of me!" McCarthy shook himself free and stood waiting with fists clenched. But Nichols did not get up.

Butt knelt down beside him.

"He isn't hurt," he said. "But let him alone. Fighting won't do any good. Look here, Nichols! Are you listening?"

"Yes," said Nichols in a muffled voice.

"You're a pretty big fool, but you'll be a bigger one if you tell anybody about this. I want a talk with you some time, but now you'd better get up and go home."

He got up, but Nichols made no move to rise.

"Oh, leave him there!" said McCarthy disgustedly, turning away.

"Understand?" demanded Butt.

But Nichols made no answer, and they left him there.

CHAPTER V

A RURAL ADVENTURE

STRANGELY enough, all these happenings failed to leak out for some little time. McCarthy did not want people to know of them, for very good reasons, and the other sophomores kept silent for his sake; Nichols still had enough influence among those freshmen who would have been likely to tell to seal their lips for the time being.

So Nichols appeared the next morning in the sophomore seats in chapel, without being noticed particularly. He was a new man, that was all, and the fact that very few people knew of his brief masquerading as a freshman enabled him to slip into his proper place without exciting any question. He appeared in the sophomore ranks in the flag-rush, and even fought as valiantly as a not over-courageous man may, hoping thereby to retrieve himself in the eyes of his class president. For Butt's words, even more than McCarthy's blow, had set him to thinking that his little joke had been undiplo-

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matic, to put it mildly, and he was anxious to make up for it.

As far as Butt was concerned, however, he apparently did not exist, and Nichols had an uncomfortable feeling that there was a general conspiracy among his new classmates to ignore him altogether. But in so thinking he was rather exaggerating his own importance, for with the exception of the Kappa Chi fellows and McCarthy, he was simply some one whom no one knew yet.

Bill, however, was already known throughout the class, and for a very similar reason to the one that kept Nichols unknown—that he had played freshman for a little time. But there was a difference, for the tale of his foolery could be told without embarrassment to any one, and Hawkins was as ready as the next man to laugh at the part that was considered a good joke on him.

Besides, Bill had the advantage of being introduced into the class life by Butt Chanler, which meant a good deal in the class of Noughty-Even, and his little efforts at sleuthing, which Hawkins magnified into something quite wonderful in his repeated tellings of them, gave him an individuality and a nickname, which also tends to help one in getting known. “Old Slouch” was what they called him, and he got the reputation of sleeping with a copy of Sherlock Holmes under his pillow, which

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was nonsense, but made him pointed out as a character. Fellows even brought harmless little mysteries for him to solve, which he did, with the superior air of the typical book hero, and by refusing to tell how he did it, which was by simply using common sense, he got a reputation for being very clever indeed.

"You're an awful bluffer, Bill," Butt told him one day. "Aren't you ashamed sometimes to string these innocents so?"

"They like it," Bill answered seriously. "You'll notice it's only the innocents that take any stock in it, and it would spoil all the fun for them if I told them how I did it. Besides, I couldn't tell them it's just using common sense. They'd see then that they haven't any, and they wouldn't like that. They're the kind of people one Mr. Barnum called suckers, and being fooled is the biggest fun they have."

Which proves that in his youthful way Bill was a practical philosopher.

All this, however, was merely incidental. Bill was starting in this new year determined to wipe out the unfortunate impression his freshman year had made on his father, and that meant that he had real work to do. He was bright enough, and when he set out to do good work he could do it. But the old habits were hard to get away from, and

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many an evening when he sat doggedly at his desk it would have taken very little to make him heave his books into a corner and throw up the whole thing. Then came in the mutual disciplining which the Kappa Chi sophomores had reduced to such a system, for when Bill sometimes did heave the books into the corner and went to the house in search of some one to loaf or frolic with, they would tell him to go about his business, really meaning it. All of which made Bill sore for the time being, and he would go away in a state of righteous wrath, calling them a set of greasy grinds, who took it upon themselves to manage what was no concern of theirs at all. But these fits of wrath always passed, and he came at length to admit that this high-handed practice, unusual as it was, was at the same time rather a good thing. At any rate, he ceased to struggle against it and did not carry out his threat of seeking companions that weren't so fussy, with the result that his father began to believe again that his eldest son might turn out to be something besides a scatterbrain after all.

But Bill's studying and getting his lessons, though a very excellent thing, is not the point of this story, and it is alluded to merely to indicate that such things were daily features of his life—something that the reader might not be blamed for forgetting at times.

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His first weeks in Tresham were filled principally with getting acquainted. His acquaintances were many. They extended pretty generally through his own class, with occasional incursions among the freshmen and juniors, and even among the seniors in his own house. But not so many of them ripened into friendship, for in spite of all of his ready mingling with whatever people he was thrown with, Bill was not a fellow to rush into a great number of intimacies. Outside the men in the house, McCarthy was almost the only one in his own class for whom he grew to care especially, and Mac was a person of erratic ways, who came often and stayed away long, according to a fashion all his own, and Bill could not have claimed him as a special crony. Among the juniors the ones he knew best were Donnel and Crane, two fellows who were neither of them notable in any particular way, but just likable. Perhaps the chief thing he liked about Crane was the genial way in which he poked fun at the detective stunts, for he appreciated just how much of them were pure bluff. But while he was laughing at them, he took delight in adding touches that made Bill's solutions more mysterious than ever, and many a gullible "innocent" was convinced that Bill was a veritable wonder merely by the half serious mud-dles that Crane led them into. And he was the one who christened Bill "Old Slouch."

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Bill had taken a fancy to Burnet, too, from the night when he hazed him, but he found that for the present to be intimate with a freshman was not considered the proper thing. Burnet had a period of probation to go through, as a prospective member of the Kappa Chi fraternity, and it was the policy of the brothers to ignore him when they were not impressing him with the fact that he was nothing but an insignificant freshman, and until this was over and he was finally initiated Bill had to do likewise.

Chanler, Gray, Hawkins, and Durham were the four whom he saw the most and who became his closest friends. He found that on the whole they were as good fellows as he had ever known. Chanler's one fault was that he had got the habit of leadership, and whatever came along he was inclined to take hold of it and run it to suit himself. But that was not such a bad fault after all, for Butt was a good leader, and he was not objectionable about it.

Gray was preëminently a follower, quiet, unoriginal, and altogether a very comfortable person to have around. Hawkins and Durham, whom Bill did not see quite so much of now because they were giving about all of their spare time to the football team, gave the impression of being just the opposite. Each in his own way, they seemed to be about as

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independent as possible—Hawkins with a good deal of noise and bluster, and Durham in a good-natured, easy-going fashion that nevertheless seemed just as immovable. But Bill came to see that when it got right down to business Butt managed them just as effectively as he did Gray, which made Bill smile to himself, for either one of them could have taken Butt and tossed him out the window without even exerting himself.

So, among these people, the days of early autumn passed, and Bill found that he was really glad his father had sent him east, to Tresham.

Then came a holiday, which is known at Tresham as Mountain Day, when the Kappa Chi brethren called a truce with the freshmen they were preparing to initiate and took them on an outing. They chartered three huge carryalls, packed away a good-sized luncheon, and set out for a day in the country—most of them.

Hawkins and Durham did not go. They had football practice, and they planned to leave late in the afternoon and join the rest in time for supper. Colchester did not go because he wanted to sleep late that morning,—nor Burnet, because his father was going to pass through town that morning and it was necessary that he see him.

And Bill did not go, because a certain essay in history that he had vowed to get off his hands was

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still unfinished, and he heroically made up his mind that he would not make merry a single minute till it was done. This was not a particular sacrifice under the present circumstances, because he could easily get it out of the way by working in the morning, and it was planned that he, Colchester, and Burnet should get a smaller rig early in the afternoon and join the crowd just outside the little old town of Greenmeadow. That would be quite as much fun as going with the early starters, and would get them there in time for the best of the doings.

Just after lunch they started, with Hawkins and Durham waving an elaborate farewell to them from the porch.

"You'd better keep watch of the guide-posts and ask your way every little while," advised Hawkins as Colchester picked up the reins to drive off. "Effie has the record for getting lost around here, and if you don't look out he'll land you in some God-forsaken place that nobody ever heard of."

"By-by, children," said Colchester serenely. "We'll be waiting for you at dinner time if you don't miss the train. I've been this way at least three times," he added, to allay any doubts his companions may have had. "That joke of theirs is a chestnut."

They had no doubts, however, and felt quite confident that Effie would get them there without

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any trouble at all. It was a perfect day, and they did not much care whether they got anywhere or not so long as they kept on going. This country was all new to Bill, and this particular part of it to Burnet, and they were full of content just to amble leisurely along, talking when they felt like it, now and then breaking into song, and sometimes simply driving on in silence. Bill had the virtuous feeling of one who has done his duty, and Burnet, on top of a successful plea to his father regarding a matter of great importance—his monthly allowance—was enjoying to the full the novel experience of not being treated like the scum of the earth by upper-classmen. Burnet was not particularly strong for Kappa Chi's ante-initiation discipline.

"I guess we'd better take this road to the left," said Colchester after a time, bringing the horse to a stop at a cross-roads. "We'll get a dandy view of the river this way." So they took the road to the left.

The view was well worth while, and they rolled along for another two hours before Colchester began to show signs of uneasiness. He had been feeling uneasy for some time before he showed the signs of it, but finally he had to come to a halt and admit that he didn't know exactly where he was.

"I've been here before—I know that," he said, searching the landscape for something that would

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guide him. "But I don't believe it's the way to Greenmeadow."

"There's a man over in that orchard," said Burnet. "We might ask him."

"Excellent idea," cried Colchester, and he was about to suggest that Burnet do the asking, but the freshman forestalled him by jumping out of the carriage and hurrying across the field.

The man in the orchard informed them that they were headed some miles to the east of Greenmeadow and were so far out of their way that they could not hope to get there before dark. Yorkville was the next town on the road they were traveling, but by turning to the left about a mile up they could eventually strike the right direction again.

Before they reached the turn, however, a gaudy billposter, stuck to the side of an old barn, inspired Colchester with a new idea.

"Doesn't that appeal to you?" he cried, stopping the horse for a more careful inspection. "For four years I've been wanting to go to a Yorkville Cattle Show, and I've never thought of it in time. We can't get to Greenmeadow for supper anyway, and we might see the fag end of this. What do you say?"

They said they didn't mind—in fact, the idea rather appealed to them—and instead of turning to the left a mile up, they kept straight ahead and ar-

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rived at the Yorkville fair grounds with an hour of the afternoon still before them.

They hitched the horse under a shed and set about making a tour of the sights. Colchester had been to country fairs in the days of his boyhood, but the others had not, and they found plenty to amuse them. The pig and cow and poultry exhibits received careful attention first, as was fitting, and then they started the rounds of the other shows.

"Will you look who's here!" exclaimed Bill, stopping at the edge of a crowd that surrounded a tentlike structure in which some entertainment was evidently about to begin. A few feet away from them stood Bobby Crane, eating peanuts with gusto and grinning amiably upon them.

"Greetings!" he called, beckoning with his bag of peanuts.

"What are you doing here, Bobby?" asked Colchester, offering a bag of popcorn in exchange.

"Scattering peanut shells and seeing the sights. I've been trying to visit one of these things ever since I heard Charley Dalton tell about the one he came to once, and I was bound I'd come over this fall if I had to come alone. I had to—I couldn't find a soul that showed a spark of interest—so I took my touring car and came along."

"Where's the touring car?"

"Back in the chicken exhibit. Oh, you ought to

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have seen me arrive! I think nobody ever saw a motorcycle around here before. I was one of the exhibits myself! I had to lock the thing up to get a little decent privacy."

"What goes on here?" asked Bill, seeing that the people were beginning to flock into the tent.

"Monsieur Louis Mullana, the eminent French hypnotist, the eighth wonder of the world!" Crane indicated a flaring placard with a toss of a peanut shell. "Only one dime—ten cents, and I'm going to blow myself."

They all decided to blow themselves, and having paid their dimes, were admitted to the tent. It was not a large tent, and they had hardly entered when the doorkeeper announced that those still waiting would have to wait on till the next performance. After making fast the flap that served as a door he disappeared, and a couple of minutes later mounted the small stage at the other end of the tent in the guise of Monsieur Mullana.

"What'll you bet his name didn't use to be Maloney?" whispered Crane, as the eighth wonder of the world advanced to the front of the stage and began to explain the nature of the marvels he was about to perform with an accent that certainly never came out of sunny France.

"Now would some kind members of the audience kindly step to the platform and lend me their

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valuable assistance in doing the little experiments I intend to try?" he asked, rubbing his hands together and beaming perspiringly upon the tightly packed gathering. "I have a regular assistant, but you might say that he was in league with me, so I would like some member of the audience who you all know to kindly step to the stage, so you can see that everything I claim is bony fide."

Kind members of the audience were slow to respond to this invitation, being naturally timid in the face of such marvels as Monsieur had guaranteed to perform.

"Here's a chance for a little psychological investigation," suggested Crane, leading the way, and as one man the four climbed upon the platform. That broke the spell, and six or eight others allowed their curiosity to dispel their timidity and came forward also. The audience, moved by this daring of their fellow-townsmen, crowded closer.

The volunteers were arranged in a circle on the platform, with Monsieur's assistant in the center. When the arrangement was satisfactory Monsieur took his stand in front of them, his back to the audience. He stood impressively silent for a moment with his hand over his eyes.

"He's summoning the spirits," whispered Crane audibly, and the circle wavered uneasily.

Suddenly Monsieur lifted one arm in an impera-

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tive gesture. Every eye was glued upon him. Then with an unintelligible cry he gave his arm a violent wave and stamped his foot.

"You cannot move!" he announced. "Try! You cannot move!"

For an instant the circle was motionless. Then, defiantly, different members of it lifted a foot or wriggled an arm, and the audience stirred with a sound that was part sighs of relief and part laughter. It would take more than this Frenchman to come any mysteries over them! Then their relief and amusement merged into astonishment, for two of the circle had not moved. The assistant and Bobby Crane stood rigid, their distended eyes upon Monsieur.

"What's the matter, Bobby?" exclaimed Bill, nudging Crane, who stood beside him. "Brace up! You can move if you want to!"

For the tiniest fraction of a second the eyelid next to Bill flickered and Bill was answered.

Monsieur repeated his gyrations once more, and this time Bill did not move. Then the eminent French hypnotist tackled each one in turn, but not another man responded to his power.

"We have three very good subjects here," he announced then. "The others are not in the right state of mind, and it would take a great deal of time and will power to get them into it, and I can't afford

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it. I can work with three just as well as if there was ten," and he dismissed the others with profuse thanks.

Colchester and Burnet jumped down from the platform rather mystified. They could not believe that Monsieur Mullana had really been able to keep anyone from moving, but there stood Crane and Bill, rigid and apparently deaf to all their questioning.

"I think it's all a game of theirs," said Colchester. "But we'll stay up front here where we can butt in if anything happens."

Monsieur's first experiments were very simple, consisting solely in telling his three subjects they could not open their mouths, or lift their hands, or turn their heads. In each case the three tried desperately to do the forbidden thing, and in vain.

Monsieur turned elatedly to the audience.

"You can see my power," he said. "These two gentlemen are strangers to me—I have never set eyes on either one of them before—but they will obey everything I tell them." He turned back again till he faced Bill, and raised his arm with the strange cry that was one of the most prominent manifestations of his "power." Then with a slow motion of both hands before Bill's face he said slowly: "You are far away from here—you are in a beautiful gar-

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den full of lovely flowers and fountains and singing birds. Beautiful nymph's——”

A vacant, idiotic smile had been spreading over Bill's face, and his eye roamed languishingly over the heads of the audience. Suddenly Crane stepped forward and began slowly gyrating about the platform.

“I'm a nymph! I'm a nymph!” he warbled joyfully, waving a coquettish hand at Bill.

Monsieur's flow of description stopped for an instant, and a careful observer might have imagined that he was surprised at this evidence of his “power.” The assistant entirely forgot the beautiful garden and the singing birds, and stared as only a man in his complete senses can stare.

“Oh, nympie, nympie!” called Bill, waving his hand in turn and plainly meditating pursuit of the dancing sprite.

Up went Monsieur's arm, fairly hurling “power” at them.

“You are in a forest!” he announced sternly. “A dark, wild forest, full of savage beasts——”

The assistant got under the influence again with a wild howl, and scampered frantically into a corner. Crane was evidently no longer a nymph; he began pacing rapidly up and down the stage, uttering ferocious growls and snapping viciously at the terrified assistant. Bill forsook his pursuit to perch on the edge of the platform, chattering and grimacing, and

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scratching in a frenzied fashion at his head and sides.

A shrill wail showed that the terror of this forest primeval had spread to the audience, and a fat farmer-lady had to stop watching the performance long enough to soothe her frightened babe. Most of the on-lookers wavered between laughter and mystification, for Monsieur's awesome bearing still lent a touch of dignity to the proceedings that even these wild animal antics could not utterly destroy. But Colchester and Burnet rocked with glee, and tossed peanuts at Bill.

"Now a hunter approaches!" cried Monsieur, raising his voice above the growling and the chattering. "He raises his gun—he fires! You see, ladies and gentlemen, the animals are dead."

Dead they were, to all appearances. Bill and Crane lay stretched out on the platform without a quiver or a moan, and the assistant took heart and came out of his corner again.

"Now," and Monsieur smiled genially, "I will bring them back, and they won't remember a thing that has happened to them."

He went to Bill first, and bending over slightly made some gentle passes above his head.

"You are coming back," he murmured monotonously. "You are coming back, but you will not remember the garden and the forest—you are

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almost back—you are waking up—you are awake! ”

He finished with a quick snapping of his fingers and slapped his hands smartly together. But Bill still lay motionless.

“ You are waking up—you are almost awake! ” Monsieur repeated, and went through the snapping and slapping again. Bill did not stir.

“ He is tired—he will come out of it in a minute,” explained Monsieur easily, and went over to Crane. But Crane failed likewise to respond to his exhortations. The assistant, who was evidently so used to waking up at this juncture that he did not need to be told, came forward with something very like a worried look.

“ Did yer really do it to 'em ? ” he whispered, poking Bill with his foot.

“ S-sh ! ” hissed Monsieur, but the whisper had reached some of the audience and created a ripple of excitement. What had been merely mystifying and amusing bade fair to develop into something more serious, and even those who had not heard crowded nearer.

“ Do you think anything is really the matter with them? ” asked Burnet.

“ Of course not,” said Colchester decidedly. “ They're putting it on, just like all the rest of it.”

But the excuse that they were “ tired ” failed to

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satisfy Monsieur's audience, and keeping them from storming the platform gave him all he could attend to, while at the same time he was muttering commands, entreaties, and swear words at his two prostrate "subjects." At length they could be restrained no longer, and the assistant made a hasty and worried exit.

"Something may be the matter!" exclaimed Burnet. "Perhaps he was really making them do those things!"

"Don't you believe it! But we might as well take a hand in the reviving," and Colchester climbed to the platform and elbowed his way into the circle that now surrounded the plainly uneasy Monsieur.

The afternoon was waning, and inside the tent the light had given way to a dusky twilight in which all sorts of gruesome things seemed possible. A silence had fallen, strangely emphasized by the crying of the farmer-lady's baby, as Colchester stooped over Bill's outstretched figure. He certainly did look unusually pale.

"Bill!" Colchester cried sharply. "Look here, and cut out the fooling!" He seized Bill by the shoulder and shook him roughly.

"Better get some water," someone suggested, and Monsieur added fuel to the excitement by trying to steal away while Colchester held the center of attention. But the very mention of water seemed

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to have a restorative effect, for Bill began to moan uneasily and after a minute opened his eyes.

"What's the matter?" he murmured, and at the same time Crane also began to show signs of returning consciousness.

"Ye can see they're all right!" protested Monsieur, so hard pressed that he had clean forgot he was a French Monsieur. But his audience had been stirred to too deep an indignation at his unholy practices to be calmed by any such protest as that. They were for haling him forth to justice.

"There's a row coming, and we'd better beat it," whispered Crane, getting to his feet and edging away. "The embattled farmers are going to get after Mr. Maloney good and plenty."

"Come out into the air!" said Colchester loudly, taking Bill and Crane each by an arm and leading them out. There was a movement to follow them, for the testimony of these resurrected ones would be worth listening to, but Monsieur Mullana was showing signs of fight, and that was worth much more. So Colchester and his charges came out alone, with Burnet close at their heels.

Three or four who had not been able to get admittance stood outside.

"Show over?" one of them asked.

"Oh, no—it's just beginning," answered Bill. "Say," he added, as Colchester started hurrying

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them away. "Do you think the old fakir is going to get into any trouble?"

"He may get his head punched—that's all," said Crane serenely.

"But that isn't fair! We ought to tell them we were only faking."

"Ridgeway," said Crane solemnly, "those people paid their good dimes to go in there and get fooled—but they didn't want to know it. If Monsieur Maloney can get away with it and make them think they've seen something marvelous, they'll feel that they've had their money's worth and be properly grateful. It'll give 'em something to talk about for a good long time. But if you get foolish and tell 'em it's all a fake, they'll turn and rend you—take my word for it. Personally, I'm going over to the chicken shed and get my touring car, and then I'm going home."

"Don't run away and desert us like that. Isn't there a hotel or something around here where we can get a square meal?" asked Colchester.

"There's a hotel in Yorkville—I don't know about the square meal."

"You'd better stay and try it, Bobby."

Bobby consented to stay, and they found the meal as square as they had any desire for. Colchester called up the Greenmeadow Inn, where the rest of the Kappa Chi brethren were holding forth,

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and, lest they should be worrying about him, told them he had suddenly changed his mind and come to the Yorkville Cattle Show.

"If you have any regard for my feelings at all," he pleaded when he came back to the table, "for Heaven's sake swear that that's the truth. That man Hawkins will howl about it for a week if he knows I lost my way."

Burnet, especially, enjoyed that meal, as he had enjoyed the whole afternoon. It had been weeks, now, it seemed, since any of the Kappa Chi men had treated him like a fellow being, and to-day, with Bill and Colchester calling him "Bunny" and apparently forgetting that he was a measly freshman, was a day to be remembered. He wished very much that there were no such things as seniors and sophomores and freshmen. People get on such a lot better when they forget it.

The evening was well along when Crane gave them parting explicit instructions about the way home and mounted his motorcycle to speed ahead.

"I'm sorry, but I can't mope along at your gait," he said. "My old steed here would run down."

With the big autumn moon to light them they had a long and beautiful ride back. Burnet lingered while the horse was put in the stable, and his good night at the corner was almost wistful.

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“Poor Bunny!” said Bill, when he had left them and turned toward the Dorms. “To-morrow he’s got to call us Mister again, and take off his hat to us.”

“It won’t be much longer,” answered Colchester. “And it’s supposed to be good for him. Coming down to the house?”

CHAPTER VI

FRESHMAN BURNET WRITES A THEME

SUFFERING kittens, Bunny! You don't call this an English theme, do you?"

It being a vacant hour between recitations, Bill had dropped into Burnet's room to save himself the five minutes' walk down to Mrs. Sleeper's and back. This had become more or less of a habit with him since initiation was over and he was able to associate with the freshmen on terms approaching equality, and he was poking about on the table for something to read, though he usually ended by spending the hour in talking. A bulky manuscript, written in a scrawly hand and folded, was the only thing new he came upon, and struck by its size, he picked it up curiously.

"Sure!" answered Burnet. "Better read it. There's a lot of things in it I bet you never knew before."

"I should hope so! If I knew enough to fill this I'd quit going to college. How did you ever have the nerve to hand it in? If I were a professor I'd flunk a man that handed me a thing this size."

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"No you wouldn't, after you'd read it. I got an A on that theme."

"Conundrum: Why is Bunny Burnet like a shrinking violet? Answer: He isn't, because a shrinking violet doesn't write English themes and is noted for its modesty." Bill fixed himself by the window and unfolded the manuscript. "I've only got an hour, but I'll tackle the first instalment. 'Sabrina,' eh? How do you come to know so much about Sabrina?"

"Oh, my family used to live in Tresham years ago, when Sabrina used to be here, and my uncle was in college when they started the banquet stunt. I've got a brother who was a Sabrina man, too."

"Quite a Sabrina family. Why didn't you wait a year, so you could be in the right class yourself?"

"Couldn't. I think I'll go through in three years, though. That'll land me in an even-year class and do just as well—unless we should happen to get her away from you."

"Hu-uh! A fat chance you stand of getting her away, from all I've heard on the subject! I guess you'd better try plugging real hard and skip into our class. There are worse classes to be in, you know. Say, Bunny, I wish you'd had this typewritten. You're one of the real genii, if bum writing is any sign."

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Burnet made no reply and Bill started reading.

He had heard of Sabrina almost the first day after he arrived in Tresham, but she was still hardly more than a name to him, and he knew next to nothing of her history. To tell the truth, that history, as most people know it now, is such a mixture of fact and fiction, mingled haphazard as it has come down through the years, that no undergraduate of to-day can tell what is to be vouched for and what not. But everyone accepts the story as tradition has shaped it, and it was thus that Burnet had put it down in his theme.

Burnet sat down at his desk with a book before him, but with the conscious air of an author whose work is under inspection he kept stealing glances at Bill's face, seeking for some expression of approval or enjoyment there. But Bill's face wore nothing but a scowl.

"Say, Bunny," he exclaimed at length. "What's this word?"

Burnet went over and looked.

" 'Legends,' of course," he said.

"No 'of course' about it! It looks like 'liquids' to me. You never dot your *i's* anyway. How is anyone to know those are *e's*?"

He struggled on, with Burnet standing by to decipher whenever he could not make out a word.

"Honestly, I can't read it!" he cried at length.

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"It's—it's worse than a Greek lesson. Read it to me, won't you? I'd really like to find out something about the old lady, and you ought to have a fact or two tucked away somewhere in all this mass."

Burnet took the manuscript, colored, and coughed. He disliked reading his own production aloud—it sounded like showing off—but he had literary aspirations, and he really wanted Bill's opinion of it.

"Shall I start at the beginning?" he asked.

"I wish you would. To tell the truth, I didn't exactly get the drift of it all."

"All right. Only if you fall asleep, I'll throw something at you," he said, and began reading.

"Sabrina has been an institution at Tresham College for so long that she has finally become a full-fledged tradition, about whom legends have been busy now for many a year. Long ago, when the college was only a little cluster of some half dozen buildings or so on the hill, she occupied a respectable decorative position on the campus, and all who would might come and look upon her. But students in those days saw only the bronze statue of a maiden, sitting peaceably in the middle of an ordinary flower bed. Those who had studied their college English to good purpose—if boys studied college English in that far-off time—could recog-

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nize in her, if they thought about it, a certain kindly water fairy, who came to the rescue of a distressed lady in a famous poem by John Milton.' ”

Burnet turned the page and looked up inquiringly.

Bill nodded.

“ Very fine! ” he observed. “ Sounds just like a real author.”

Burnet continued reading.

“ ‘ But I am afraid they did not consider her with the respect so classical a person deserved. At any rate, they did not treat her respectfully, for one morning when everyone was hurrying to get into his seat before the chapel bell stopped ringing, the bronze goddess sat revealed to them in the midst of her little garden, decked in a hideous coat of fresh paint. It was green paint, if I remember rightly. From that day the poor lady was the object of all manner of indignities. On winter mornings the chapel-goers came to find it no uncommon thing to behold her draped fantastically in a bright-hued crazy quilt, or clad in the cast-off garments of some freshman, bent on a practical joke. From time to time she received a new coat of paint, until her original color was a thing to be guessed at, perhaps, but never known for certain. At length those in authority decided that she was no longer a dignified and beautiful ornament for the campus, though

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originally, I have heard, she was very beautiful. There is a small reproduction of her in the library now.' ”

“Where?” asked Bill.

“Upstairs in a sort of show-case. I shouldn't have put that in, according to Mr. Professor's red-ink marks. It spoils the continuity.”

“Interesting fact, though. I'll have a look at her.”

“‘She was cast away,’ ” Burnet continued, “‘to be sold for old junk, and passed into the oblivion of the janitor's junk heap, where she lay, no one knows how long, forgotten. Since then, the public at large has seen her no more.

“‘Since then, too, the public at large has had to depend wholly upon hearsay for news of her, and here legend has stepped in and taken a hand in her history. Many things are told of her that may never have happened at all, but what we can be sure of is this—that one year one of the students who had always lived in Tresham and remembered Sabrina as a boy——’ ”

“It wasn't your respected uncle, was it?”

“No; my uncle didn't live in Tresham. But it was one of his classmates. I used to get Uncle Henry to tell me about it when I was a kid. He was one of the fellows——”

“Let's hear your tale in its proper order.

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You're no kind of an author to be interrupting your story to skip ahead that way."

"Very well,—'conceived the idea of hunting her up, if she still existed. He found that she did still exist, and that the janitor, who for some reason had not been willing to destroy her, had put her away somewhere. After searching around, he at length discovered her in the janitor's barn. That discovery marked the beginning of her second series of adventures, which have continued to this day. She was kidnapped and taken away to a class banquet. It evidently proved to be a successful stunt, for the class kept her as its presiding goddess all the rest of the time they were in college, and when they came to be seniors, being an even-year class, they planned to turn her over to the next even-year class, then sophomores, as a most sacred legacy. It was to be a grand affair, observed with fitting ceremonies and ending in a celebration that everyone who took part in it would remember as one of the times of his life. But their plans did not turn out happily. Those who had charge of the matter attempted to carry the goddess through the town, in broad daylight, in an open wagon. The result was disastrous. A crowd of odd-year men saw them, and almost before the guardians of the statue realized what was happening, they had lost her.

"Then the odd-year men made her their divin-

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ity, and they in turn planned to bequeath her to their successors. They accomplished their plan more successfully, and Sabrina might be the goddess of the odd classes to this day if an even-year man had not discovered that she was to be shipped somewhere by express, and fooled an assistant expressman into handing her over to him. He got away with her, but his class spirit got him into a lot of trouble. The law was invoked, and the story is that he had to take a little trip out of the country until the storm blew over.

“ ‘ From that time, every two years, Sabrina has been handed down from class to class, so that for years even-year classes have been known as “Sabrina men,” held together by a bond which enemies may scoff at but never deny. They have a song to her which is their war chant:

“ All hail, Sabrina dear,
The widow of each passing year;
Long may she ever be
The widow of posterity,”

and their singing of it is always a cry to battle that stirs up a furore fit to raise the roof, for no odd-class man can hear it without shouting his loudest to drown it out.

“ ‘ The goddess is never seen even by her worshipers except at a banquet, which is held every other

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year and is a great secret. No odd-class man has beheld her at all since the days of the early Nineties, though they still vainly struggle to regain possession of her. That is why freshmen and juniors stick more closely by one another at Tresham than they do at other colleges—if they belong to an even-year class, because they are Sabrina men, if not, because they hate Sabrina.

“ ‘ They tell all sorts of tales about the places her guardians have hidden her in. In the good old days that older men always love to boast of, she had very wonderful adventures, buried in caves, hidden in barns, sunk in harbors. She spent a year in a negro crap joint down among the city wharves; she took a trip to Europe. They even say that once she stayed for a time at the bottom of the college well. But now—again according to hearsay—they follow a more modern fashion and keep her securely in a safe-deposit vault. When the sophomore class is entrusted with her she is put into the hands of one man. He alone knows where she is concealed, and no one else even knows who this guardian is except the president of the class, who appoints him.

“ ‘ That is all we know of Sabrina now, and all of this we cannot be sure of. Perhaps a good deal of it is mere glamour gilded by the artistic hand of fancy. She makes a good story anyway, and we who can never behold her may console ourselves with the

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thought that, after all, she is now more of a tradition than anything else. The old, keen rivalry that once made such strong class spirit has departed. The old sporting element has dropped out, for in these prosaic days the love of adventure is dead. There is no chance any more for us to get at her. We cannot break open safe-deposit vaults, nor can we go down to New York and storm a hotel that is guarded by policemen. For nowadays it is always there, and thus, that Sabrina men hold their banquets. She cannot mean so much to them now as she did in the olden days, when to keep her meant to fight for her. And so what was once one of the finest incentives to class spirit in college has degenerated into a biennial excuse for a good time.' ”

Burnet had forgotten that he was merely reading a theme he had written for his course in English. He lost himself in the spirit of what he was saying, and with raised voice and flushed cheeks, he finished in a grand elocutionary flourish. Then Bill, with serious face but twinkling eyes, applauding wildly in dumb show, brought him to earth.

“ Well? ” he questioned, rather embarrassed at his own enthusiasm.

“ We-ll,” Bill spoke judicially, as if rendering a weighty opinion, “ I think that ending’s a little strong for a man who is planning to skip a class so

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he can go and do likewise. Isn't there just a little bit of green apples, or sour apples, or whatever you call it, in that grand finale? "

"No, sir!" declared Burnet emphatically. "You wait till you've been here a while longer and see if you don't think the same thing. You'll never admit it, of course, because you're a Sabrina man, but I know just the way you'll feel about it."

"Hum! You know, Bunny, I've been in this institution just exactly as long as you have—but perhaps you've had better chances of sizing this thing up. I can't say I've got into the Sabrina spirit very hard yet, that's true."

"But just look! Don't you think all those things must have been fun? And wasn't there something sort of splendid about it besides—that idea of having something that held the classes together, and that they could fight for, and all that? I can feel it myself, just for a minute, when they sing that 'All hail, Sabrina,' before people get to yelling and make a farce out of it."

"But the yelling ought to be just what you like—fighting and rivalry and that sort of thing. That's the kind of spirit you're howling for, isn't it? "

"Oh, Billy! You know it isn't! The yelling is as far as they ever get now, and that's just a matter of form. There isn't anything back of it. How

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can there be when everybody knows they won't ever get a chance to do anything *but* yell? You don't know how it used to be when Sabrina was real. There was always a chance that something might really happen then."

"Well! Where's your tobacco, Bunny? Thanks. You know, all these things you hear about that used to happen make pretty good stories, but I have an idea there's about as much doing now. Perhaps not in the Sabrina line—the old lady may have petered out. But there are plenty of other things. Maybe when it gets to be our turn we can stir up a little enthusiasm about her again. I guess the fellows would scrap over her now as hard as they ever did if they had a chance."

"That's the trouble: there aren't any more chances. You Sabrina men are scared to death of taking a chance. You want it to be such a sure thing that you'd have your old banquet out in San Francisco before you'd risk our being within reaching distance of you."

"It's too bad, Bunny! I tell you, if I ever get to be the sacred lady's custodian, I promise you I'll hide her right here in Tresham. That's about as near as I can get. And after she's handed on to somebody else I'll tell you all about it."

"I guess that's a safe promise, all right. Butt Chanler will have to appoint the man from your

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class, and you won't catch him appointing one of his own delegation."

"Perhaps not, but that might be the very reason he'd do it. You can't tell. Anyway, you'd better keep your eye on William."

Burnet laughed and folded his manuscript. "Talk about shrinking violets!" he exclaimed. "But say, who do you suppose has her now?"

"Couldn't tell, really. Meredith knows, I presume, according to that document of yours. Has he always been class president?"

"I don't know—but——" Burnet still held his manuscript in his hand, tapping it and hesitating. "Say, honestly," he said abruptly, "what do you think of this stuff? Do you think I can write?"

"Lord, don't ask me! I thought it was good enough. I was interested anyway, and I know I couldn't do anywhere near as well myself. You've got sort of a literary bug, haven't you, Bunny?"

"Um—sort of, maybe." Seeing that he could not get a real criticism, Burnet was ready to drop the subject. His "literary bug" was not a thing he liked to talk about in cold blood. "The bell is going to ring in about two minutes and I've got to get down to the Lab. Coming?"

Bill's next recitation happened to be a lecture that wasn't particularly engrossing, and he found

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after a few minutes that, instead of listening to the professor, he was reviewing in his mind the scraps of Sabrina lore Burnet had just been reading to him. Most of it he had never heard before, and it had a story-book kind of attraction for him that set his fancy working. It smacked of secrecy and adventure, and though he had listened carelessly enough to Burnet's enthusiasm, the spirit of it was contagious, and his thoughts were busy all during the hour weaving new tales about the much-traveled goddess, in which he himself bore part.

When the lecture was over he made straight for the house and for Butt's room, bent on getting further information. He found Butt practicing on his mandolin—he seemed to be forever doing that nowadays—and Durham reading in a corner as serenely as if there were no such thing as an ambitious amateur musician within miles.

"Butt!" Bill waited for a lull in the practicing, but none seemed imminent, and he interrupted. Butt did not stop, but continued to play, only noticing Bill's peremptory greeting with an absent "Uh-huh?"

"Listen, won't you? I'm looking for information."

Butt stopped, his pick poised above the strings.

"Fire ahead—I'm a regular fountain of it."

"I want to know some more about Sabrina."

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"She's the guardian angel of the best class in Tresham College, and if you're a good boy you'll be allowed to look upon her some time before the year's over."

"Oh, I knew that before! Haven't you any inside information?"

"Um — little boys shouldn't ask questions — about Sabrina."

"Robert Barrington Chanler, if you call me a little boy again I'll turn you over my knee."

"He is obstreperous for a small-sized person, isn't he?" observed Durham, looking up from his book.

"Does he really know a lot of things nobody else knows, or is he just bluffing?"

"Oh, that's a habit of his, and it's growing on him. Just say 'Sabrina' to little Robert and he puffs out with all kinds of things he could tell if he only would."

"Butt! Does that mean the banquet is coming off pretty soon?" cried Bill.

"When the proper time comes for you to know, you will know whatever is proper for you to know," and Butt began diligently tinkling away at his mandolin again.

"Don't be so easy, Bill," advised Durham. "He's stringing you, and it's just his meat when anyone bites like that."

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"Butt, will you shut off that noise for a minute and listen?" Butt shut off the noise, smiling. "If you go to treating me like a rank outsider, I'll get busy and ferret out the whole business. You know I'm an awful ferreter."

Butt continued to smile indulgently.

"Sure you are. But I guess you don't know Sabrina. She's a magic lady, and she doesn't ferret worth a cent. Call in Mr. Sherlock Holmes and all the rest of your sleuthhounds, and I'll bet on Sabrina every time. They've been trying to track her for years, you know."

"Oh, yes. *They* have! But *I* haven't begun yet."

"Gee, Bill, you don't care what you say about yourself, do you? But you want to remember that Sabrina isn't Herbie Nichols."

"Humph!" Bill gave vent to something that was both a snort and a laugh. "You must be getting friendly with the funny man. How long since he's been 'Herbie'?"

"Oh, Herbie isn't so bad after you get to know him. Just a little crude, and if you're terribly fussy you might say that he lacks some of the instincts of a gentleman. But he means as well as anyone can."

"I should call that knocking some, if you asked me."

"No, it isn't. I'm not knocking him, I'm just

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telling the truth. I've been seeing more or less of him lately, and he isn't such a bad sort, honestly. He's pretty well ashamed of that stunt of his, hazing time. It was an asinine thing to do, I know, but it isn't right to judge him just by that. You or I might have done the very same thing if we'd been like him."

"But we don't happen to be like him, and that isn't conceit either."

"I think Butt's getting scared about his popularity," remarked Durham with the suggestion of a wink. "He's afraid he hasn't got his class presidency cinched quite strong enough, so he's drumming up touts. I would like to state that personally, however, I don't think much of bootlicking," and Durham ducked down behind his book.

Butt flushed indignantly.

"Bull Dur——" he burst out, and stopped.

"Got a rise!" chuckled Durham.

"Well, I think Nichols likes me, and there's no need of being nasty and snobbish to him just because I don't happen to be crazy over him."

"Do you talk Sabrina secrets with him?" asked Bill slyly.

Butt serenely ignored the question and went at his practicing again. Bill picked up a magazine that lay on the table, found it was one he had already read, and sauntered upstairs to Colchester's room.

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He had found a congenial soul in Colchester, and Effie's room was one of his favorite dropping-in places. But to-day the door proved to be locked when he started to enter.

"Who is it?" called Colchester from inside.

"Bill. Never mind! I didn't want anything special."

But Colchester opened the door.

"Come on in," he said.

"Sure I'm not butting in on anything?"

"Not a thing. I'd tell you if you were."

Bill protested no more but entered. He halted for the fraction of a second when he saw who else was there, a sudden suspicion flashing across his mind, born of all the Sabrina talk he had been hearing that morning. Colchester's visitor was Meredith, the senior president, not a great frequenter of the Kappa Chi house. Bill eyed him closely, looking for some sign that his coming had been an embarrassing interruption. He found none at all, but the suspicion lingered. Out of sheer curiosity he ventured on a remark that might reveal a betraying word or look.

"I've been hunting for information all over the house," he said, "and I can't get anybody that will tell me a thing. I never saw such a tight bunch."

"Then you've come to the original information

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bureau," Colchester rejoined. "What's the subject?"

"Sabrina."

Bill watched them both closely, but not so much as the flicker of an eyelid told that he had hit any mark. Meredith continued his imperturbable smoking, and Colchester smiled amiably.

"Merry's the man for you," he said, flicking the ashes off his cigarette. "He's supposed to know all there is for anybody but *the* man to know about the lady's present state of health."

"Oh, I wasn't looking for secrets," cried Bill hastily, with a sudden fear that he had been too fresh. "But the minute I spoke of Sabrina to Butt Chanler, he put on a 'run away, little one, and don't ask questions' air—you know that's enough to make anyone want to nose around."

"Sabrina is quite safe, so far as I know," Meredith remarked evenly. "You know this is the year for the banquet. You'll see her if you take it in."

Bill had an uneasy feeling that Meredith was using seriously the "don't ask questions, little one," attitude that Butt had been assuming in fun. Meredith was not like Colchester. He seemed always conscious of being a senior, as if that were a distinction which others might overlook, and though he was always affable enough toward Bill, it was

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with an air of unbending that came perilously near being condescension.

"Well, I'll try to be a good boy, and deserve the honor," Bill could not resist replying, but so amiably that only Colchester saw how little he meant it. And Colchester immediately changed the subject.

"They've got the Thanksgiving trip all arranged," he observed. "We start Wednesday."

"What—the Musical Clubs?" cried Bill. "Am I going to be taken along?"

"Maybe—if you're a good boy. And Butt, too. You're engaged right now for Thanksgiving. We're going out to my town, you know, and I want you and Butt and Tommy to put up with me."

"Won't I do that, though? Does Butt know yet?"

"Not unless he's seen Tod Smith since two o'clock. It wasn't finally decided till then."

"I'll have to be going along," interrupted Meredith, rising and reaching for his hat.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Merry!" Colchester exclaimed. "We've sort of got glee clubs and mandolin clubs on the brain down here just now, and I forget other people may be sensible enough not to have. Don't hurry away!"

But Meredith really had to go, rather to Bill's relief.

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"Doesn't he ever loosen up?" he asked when Meredith was safely out of the room.

"Oh, yes. But he keeps that as a kind of special accomplishment for his friends. He's done it right here in this room, though, once or twice."

Bill let fall his jaw in mock amazement.

"This very room? I want to know! But, Effie, don't tell Butt about the trip for just a little while. I know how I can worry him, and I want to pay him back for the uppish way he's acted to me all day."

"All right. But Bill——" as Bill started for the door, "why this sudden thirst for information?"

Bill paused on the threshold.

"Information?"

"Didn't you say you came up here hunting for information?"

"Oh, you mean about Sabrina?"

"Yes."

"Oh, Bunny Burnet had me reading a theme he wrote about her this afternoon and it got me interested."

"Oh!"

And Bill went down the hall, his mind busier than ever. Why had Colchester come back to that subject again?

CHAPTER VII

"OLD SLOUCH" ON THE WARPATH

Y *EY-AY! Hold the car!"*

Three yelling figures sped up the street in the wake of the departing trolley car, coats flying open, suitcases in one hand, hats in the other. Stray students along the street took up the cry, reinforcing it with shrill whistles. At the corner the car stopped, and, hearing them, waited till they tumbled aboard, hot and panting. It was the Kappa Chi wing of the Musical Clubs—except Gray, who was always far-sighted enough to be on time—long-legged Bill in the lead, Butt next, loaded down with a mandolin case in addition to his other baggage, and last of all big Colchester, whom Tod Smith helped up the steps just as the car started moving again.

"If you get out of my sight on this trip before the last concert's over, I'll eat my new hat-box!" exclaimed the anxious leader. "For once I'm going to make sure myself you don't miss any trains."

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"I never missed one yet, did I?" asked Colchester mildly, wiping his perspiring face.

"You've given me gray hairs, you've come so near it so many times. Get along in—there's a freshman holding a seat for us up ahead," and Tod Smith pushed his big charge into the car. "Gee! You had me worried!" he cried, when they were seated. "You know Phil Sands squealed the last minute—or he didn't squeal, exactly; the doctor said there wasn't any use in his coming, because he couldn't sing with that bum throat of his—and you know what that second bass part would sound like without either of you. Those new men get scared silly when there isn't anyone to lean on."

One of those same new men, being the freshman who had held the seat for them, flushed uncomfortably at the remark he could not help overhearing. Bill, standing in the aisle just alongside, also overheard the remark and saw the flush, and catching the freshman's eye, he winked. Which comforted the freshman.

"Where've you been all the morning?" pursued Tod Smith. "Merry has been running his head off trying to find you, and I telephoned three times."

"Oh, everywhere! I've been up to the barber-shop for the last hour. I had to get one of the fellows to pack my things and bring 'em uptown, or I'd never have made this car."

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"Effie, you're the limit! Oh, I forgot! Merry gave me something to give you. Wait a minute." Smith began a leisurely search of his pockets, and Bill, who still could not help overhearing, turned his head enough to watch. He had pondered much over possible secret relations between Meredith and Colchester, and his scent for clues was aroused and alert. "Here it is," said Smith.

"Thanks." Colchester took the envelope with a splendid display of carelessness, though his eyes darted quickly about him as he put it in his inside pocket. Everyone was apparently deep in affairs of his own, including Bill, who was discussing the weather with the freshman. "Merry knew I was hard up," Colchester remarked, which evidently explained the whole matter.

The weather gave way to other topics of general interest, and Bill's conversation with the freshman kept up till they reached Southboro. But Bill had one ear open for what went on between the two seniors. It was attention wasted, however. They talked of the second bass part, and the other parts, and at length of the town they were bound for and a girl Tod Smith knew there. But not another word of Meredith.

At the Southboro station, while they were waiting for the train, Bill, ever on the watch, saw Colchester disappear around the corner of the building.

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He was gone only a very short time, and was back again before Bill could follow him. But after making sure that he would not be observed, Bill also went around the corner. There on the sidewalk were still a few tiny fragments of paper which the wind had not yet blown away, and Bill smiled as he saw them. The clues were pointing more and more certainly.

He felt like smiling many times that day, out of sheer pleasure at himself and the way things were going. If he had been required to explain just how things were going, and what they were going toward, and how he knew it, anyone would have been quite justified in laughing at him. But he felt satisfied, nevertheless. And Butt had said Sabrina didn't ferret worth a cent!

The concert that night was a small and unimportant one, which they all looked on as nothing more than a rehearsal for the Thanksgiving concert in Stanfield the next evening. Bill kept close watch on Colchester all the evening, especially after they had gone to the little hotel for the night, but his watchfulness discovered nothing. He did not expect it to, however. And he smiled again, for on the morrow they were going to Stanfield!

Stanfield was Colchester's home town, and Bill, Butt, and Gray were to be Colchester's guests. It ought to be easy to keep a fairly constant eye on

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his host, and if Meredith's note and Effie's pains to read it in secret and then destroy it had had anything at all to do with the goddess Sabrina, they meant there would be something doing in Stanfield. And if there was anything doing, Bill meant to know about it.

He wanted badly to tell Butt of his suspicions and let him into the fun of following them up, but the terribly serious way Butt looked at everything that had to do with Sabrina made him afraid. Butt would not see the fun of it, he felt sure—it would seem too much like tampering with sacred things—and he would be a wet-blanket at best; perhaps he would even blurt out the whole business and spoil everything. Bill decided that after all he had better keep his little detective lark to himself. It was safer, and besides, if it turned out to be nothing but a wild goose chase, Butt couldn't laugh at him.

But it is not altogether an easy matter to keep tabs on one's host in his own house, and the fact that Bill was naturally a respecter of the proprieties put him at rather a disadvantage when it came to sleuthing. Colchester and his family exerted themselves so heartily to make their guests feel at home that it gave him a sudden qualm of conscience. This spying business, even in fun, might be all right back in college, but to keep it up here in Colchester's home would be acting like anything but a gentle-

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man. The old bronze statue wasn't worth it, and Bill resolutely put the whole thing out of his mind.

The Colchesters made the day a Thanksgiving of the regular old-fashioned kind. The family was large anyway, and, increased by the three fellows from Tresham and Effie's two schoolgirl cousins, it made a jolly houseful. Dinner was a long and joyous feast, and after it they played kid-games, till dusk began to fall and it was time to dress for the evening.

Not till they had started upstairs did Bill notice that Colchester had disappeared, and the thoughts he had so firmly banished from his mind came popping back. They popped back to stay when he got upstairs in the room where he and Butt were to sleep. He happened to glance out one of the windows, which looked upon the huge barn that was at the back of the house, and he glanced just in time to see Colchester closing the barn door. He locked it and came toward the house. In his hand he carried a hammer.

The sight of that hammer was to Bill like the scent of blood to a bloodhound. It was perfectly clear to him now. Sabrina was in that barn, nailed up in a box probably, and Colchester had been paying her a visit! Why, he did not stop to think, but he felt sure she was there. His face flushed with excitement, and his eyes gleamed as they stared

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out the window. He was so close, and he was so sure!

“What are you looking at?” came Butt’s voice behind him. Bill started and laughed nervously.

“A barn, and some trees, and—and I think I see some more trees back of the barn,” he answered, turning abruptly from the window.

“Exciting sight. See if you can’t fix this tie for me, won’t you? One end of it wants to twist up, and I can’t make it stay down.”

Bill tackled the tie, his thoughts still on the barn and the secret it held.

“Come on, Bill! Wake up, can’t you?” Butt exclaimed. “You won’t be ready for supper.”

“Oh, Lord! Have we got to eat again? I had enough dinner to last me a week.”

“Sure—and we’ve got to look out for Effie’s cousins.”

“Thunder! I’d forgotten all about the cousins. Light the light, won’t you?”

“Why, I thought you were making quite a hit with them.” Butt lighted the lamp and sat down to wait. He was all ready himself.

“I made a hit by leaving them to you and Tommy.” Bill was hurrying into his clothes now, and losing time by it. “Where’s that new collar I got this morning?”

“’Most dressed?” came Colchester’s voice from

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the doorway. "Golly, I've got to hurry up. I was fooling around out in the barn and I clean forgot about dressing for supper. Don't wait for me. Go right down as soon as you're ready."

They found Gray already there when they got downstairs, with the two cousins. Bill claimed to have a horror of girls, and he had successfully managed to keep at a comfortable distance from them so far to-day, with some one else always around so that it never became necessary for him to make conversation all by himself. But now Butt and Gray deliberately monopolized the older cousin, leaving him to get along with Mildred the best he could. Mildred was very young and apparently very shy, which did not help, but Bill set himself to talk to her.

"I suppose we're going to have a big time to-night, with all the dancing and all that," he said politely. "Have you ever heard the clubs before?"

"No," she answered, and conversation languished while Bill racked his brain for another remark.

"Have you ever been in Tresham?" he asked at length.

"No," she answered again. "But Gladys has," she added after a pause.

Bill could hear Gladys laughing and talking on

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the other side of the room. He wished Mildred were as easy to entertain.

"Did she like it?" he pursued.

"Oh, she loved it!" Mildred grew suddenly enthusiastic. "Please, Mr. Bill, won't you tell me about the things they do at college? I think they're such fun. I love to hear Frank tell about them."

"Frank?" repeated Bill.

She laughed shyly.

"Oh, you all call him Effie. I suppose it sounds funny to hear him called Frank."

"Oh, I didn't catch on to who you meant for a minute. 'Frank' does sound funny. I guess he must have told you about most of the things."

"Oh, I know he hasn't!"

"Well, we get up in the morning, and we go to chapel, then we go to recitations, if we have any, and if we don't we study, and then we eat and then go to some more recitations and study some more and——"

"You're just making fun of me!"

"No, I'm not, honestly! Those are the things we do every day."

"But they're not the nice things! Tell me about the things they do to freshmen, the hazing, you know, and all the other stunts, and Sabrina."

"But those things come only once in a while.

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Most of the time we just jog along, and not much of anything happens, just like anywhere else."

"I don't believe it! Frank tells me the loveliest things, and they're not a bit like anywhere else."

"I told you he hadn't left me anything to tell about. I suppose you know all about Sabrina, for instance."

"Oh, not nearly! Are you a Sabrina man?"

"Yes; but I haven't seen her yet."

"Aren't you just dying to? Frank told me all about the time he did. They went to New York, you know. And now she's hidden away again, and nobody knows where she is, not a soul!"

Mildred's pretty enthusiasm tempted Bill to tease her.

"Don't you suppose even Effie—I mean Frank—knows?"

"Frank? Mercy, no! If he had her he'd forget where he put her, or else he'd forget and tell somebody who hadn't any business to know, and that would be even worse. I guess you don't know Frank very well or you'd never have thought of such a thing."

"If nobody ever thought of such a thing, he'd be about the safest person to really know about her," said Bill earnestly, forgetting that he had started in fun. "Don't you think so?"

"Why, Mr. Bill, that's so, isn't it? I wonder

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if he really is the man? I'm going to ask him this very night.”

“Oh, I wouldn't!” Bill realized in sudden dismay that he had probably been talking too much. “Of course he isn't!”

But Miss Mildred was not to be thrown off.

“But he may be! Wouldn't it be fun if he was? Oh, Frank—” she had caught sight of Colchester coming down the hall stairs and was out to meet him before Bill could utter another word of protest. “Do you know where Sabrina is hidden?”

The others were attracted by her eager question, and everyone looked at her as she stood in the doorway, catching Colchester by the lapels of his coat and looking excitedly up into his face.

Colchester's eye moved quickly around the room, stopped an instant on Bill, who stood up, red and uneasy, and then rested on his small cousin.

“I?” he said, smiling. “Why, nobody knows where she is hidden. She is a fairy, a goddess, and she flies here and there, wherever she will, and no man can tell where she is going to turn up next.”

“Nonsense, Frank! She's nothing but a heavy old statue, and she can't fly any more than you can. She's hidden somewhere, and somebody knows where. Aren't you that somebody—Honest Injun?”

Butt and Gray seemed to think it was a very

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good joke, but Bill thought there was a note of constraint in Colchester's laugh.

"Of course not! What put such a crazy idea into your head, Pussy-cat?"

"I think it's a very good idea, and Mr. Bill put it into my head. He thinks you'd be just the man to take care of her, because nobody would ever think you could do it."

The others laughed louder than ever, and Bill saw a momentary gleam in Colchester's eye that must have meant something, but whether anger, or amusement, or what, he could not tell.

"That's a sort of double-edged compliment," Colchester said smiling. "I'm glad you aren't Meredith, Bill. I'd appreciate the honor of being her ladyship's guardian, but it would be an awful lot of trouble."

Bill could think of nothing to say. He felt that while the others had been laughing and thinking it was all a joke, between him and Colchester had been a silent battle of eyes, an unspoken challenge and defiance that no one else in the room knew of. He was surer than ever now that he was right. Colchester knew where Sabrina was, for all his careless fibbing. But to have him know that *he* knew it—that spoiled all the fun and brought a seriousness into the game that meant the game must be dropped. It was no longer just amusement.

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“I should think you would find her, Mr. Bill,” said Gladys, and Bill longed to flee from the room. He felt a tension in the atmosphere that Colchester’s serene smile only emphasized. If these girls would only stop talking about it, or at least leave him out of their talk! “Mr. Chanler has just been telling what a wonderful detective you are, and Sabrina would be a lovely thing to get on the track of.”

“Bill’s a Sabrina man himself,” remarked Colchester, and though he spoke to his cousin, his eyes were on Bill. “He wouldn’t have any object in tracking down Sabrina.”

“I suppose not, but it would be such fun! Can’t you tell me something about me, Mr. Bill,—like those clever things you tell about the other men by just looking at them?”

Bill smiled uneasily, though rather relieved that Sabrina seemed to be dropping out of the conversation.

“I’m afraid I can’t. You see, the only things I ever hit on are rather queer, and I hit on them just because they are that. There isn’t anything queer about you.”

“Good work, Bill!” cried Butt with a laugh. “You’ll make a lady’s man yet.”

“Oh, that’s very nice, but I think you’re dodging,” said Gladys, blushing prettily. But Mrs. Colchester appeared at that moment and saved him the

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necessity of dodging any more by marshaling the whole company off to the dining room.

All Stanfield, apparently, had turned out for the concert that night, and when the Colchester party arrived at the hall it was nearly time to begin. The clubs had collected under the stage, in a little room that seethed with preparation and excitement. To-night was the first really important concert of the year, and the big crowd that was pouring in upstairs created a nervous eagerness that put everything into a turmoil. Above the din of banjoes and mandolins being tuned Tod Smith was vainly trying to call the Glee Club together.

"Effie, for the Lord's sake, help me round up these men!" he cried in despair. "I've been barking away for the last five minutes, and I can't make a soul hear in this racket. I want to run over the first song."

Together they coraled the Glee Club in a corner and Smith lined them up.

"Now see if you can't get into this and put some life into it without yelling your heads off," he said sharply, for he had dropped his pitch pipe and had to chase it under a settee, which roughened his temper. "We've got a good house upstairs and we've got to show 'em. Don't get scared. There's nothing to be nervous about. Walk out as if you were enjoying it, and not stand there

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like a lot of funerals. And for Heaven's sake, keep on the pitch!”

He blew a blast on his pitch pipe and waited till each one had his note. Then with a vigorous nod of his head he started them going.

“Oh, Lord! Not so loud!” he shouted, throwing up his hands. “Didn't I tell you not to yell? They can hear you all over the house. Hum it!”

“Ready, Tod?” called the manager, sticking his head in at the door. “We're five minutes late already.”

“Shut that door! Yes, we're ready if the rest are. You fellows get down here as soon as the first ensemble is over. You're rotten on that song! Hurry up, now!”

Tod Smith was plainly the most nervous one of all, which did not have a cheering effect on the new men, for whom this night's performance was more or less of a *début*. But the opening ensemble went off with a dash that restored confidence, the second attempt to rehearse the song was more successful, and when they actually appeared before the audience Colchester and the other old-timers swung the thing through with a vim that carried it in spite of some wavering in the back row. At the end Tod Smith came off the stage with cold sweat on his brow, but smiling.

“That's an encore all right!” he whispered

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loudly, standing in the wing to measure the applause. "Now loosen up on this—smile a little. They like it if you look silly: only don't look like a lot of dead ones. Go on, Effie!" And Effie led them forth upon the stage again.

Having started well, it was easy to grow better, and the audience was enthusiastic enough to spur them on to the best that was in them. Bill knew the people liked it. He could see Mildred and her sister well up toward the front, beaming upon their big cousin, who was to them the hero of them all. But Bill's thoughts kept straying away from the concert, for when the club had scattered after their first number Colchester had drawn him aside and asked him a question.

"Why have you been harping so much on Sabrina the last two or three days?"

And Bill had answered truthfully enough:

"I didn't know I had been, especially. But if I have it's because I've just begun to really know something about her, and I got interested."

"Well," Colchester's deep voice had grown deeper and his face was very serious, "remember you're a Sabrina man. You've been in Tresham long enough to know that means we stand together. And you know what standing together means."

Bill thought he saw several "meanings" in that remark. First of all, there really was founda-

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tion for his suspicions. Second, Colchester suspected that he had suspicions. But more than that, Colchester was evidently distrustful, so distrustful that he thought it necessary to speak a word of warning. Bill grew hot as he realized that. Colchester thought he did not understand the Sabrina loyalty—that he might betray something if he knew anything to betray! As that thought flashed upon him Bill rushed from where he stood to find Colchester and protest. It wasn't fair. It wronged him terribly! But Colchester had disappeared. He was out in the audience, mingling with his fellow-townsmen and gathering in compliments to repeat to Tod Smith. So Bill found no chance to speak to him again while his impulse was hot to do so. After he had thought about it a little more he decided that it wasn't worth bringing up again anyway; protests didn't amount to much.

Tod Smith was entirely pleased with the way things were going. His nervousness was gone now and instead of belaboring his songsters, he beamed and smiled upon them perpetually. To-night had been a crucial time with him. It was the first real test of his leadership, and the men he had been training for the last two months were being a credit to him.

But the applause lured him to disaster. He

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could not resist it, even when they had exhausted all the encores they had practiced on, and toward the end of the concert, when they had finished the last Glee Club number and the audience still clapped for more, he signaled still again to go back on the stage.

"We'll give 'em 'Schneider's Band,' " he whispered. "Go on, Effie."

"But we don't know it!" protested a freshman, the freshman who sang second bass and had the reputation of getting "scared silly."

"S-sh! you don't need to tell the audience about it! If you don't know it make your mouth go and keep still. The old men can sing it. Here's the pitch. Go on, now. They won't stop clapping till we do. Go on, Effie!"

Effie went on, the others uneasily following, and the banjo and mandolin men, who had gathered in the wings ready for the last ensemble, looked on and grinned. Their time of anxiety was over, and it pleased them greatly to gloat over their singing rivals at this ticklish juncture.

It was an old song the Club had sung often in years past, but they had not tried it this fall and the number of green men on the club was unusually large. This suddenly came over Smith in a sickening flash as he stood watching them troop forth, but it was too late to back out now: most of

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them were already on the stage. During the two seconds that it took to walk out to his place he almost prayed, then with a feverish look in his eye he nodded for the second bass to begin. Colchester, being the only second bass who knew the part, began the introduction alone—a gentle “Pom-pom! Pom-pom!”—and some one down in the audience began to giggle. Some one in the audience usually did giggle when they sang this song, but in his present state of tension Tod Smith forgot that. He felt sure something was wrong, and his uneasiness spread to the others, while Colchester kept up his rhythmic “Pom-poming” all by himself, with no one else joining in. More of the audience were giggling now, and out of the corner of his desperate eye Smith could see grinning, jeering faces in the wings. It would be a regular circus to those others to see the Glee Club go up in the air!

Then he realized what was the matter. One man had always started the verse as a solo, because it had to begin so softly, and that man was Phil Sands—back home now, with the bum throat. In desperation Smith plunged into the thing himself, though his tenor voice was almost lost on those low notes.

“Soldiers marching up the street,
To music grand, on every hand—”

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Then others who knew it joined in, and it began to move, but Smith knew his knees were shaking. He stiffened his legs to stop them, while his head bobbed vigorously as a sign to sing louder.

But suddenly the audience was laughing again, a ripple that spread and grew until it filled the hall. Smith felt a cold sweat breaking out all over him. What in pity's name was the matter now? The first panic was over and the song seemed to be going all right, but there was a joke somewhere. As he looked at the other men their faces reflected a look of amazement as blank as his own. Then as they swung into the loud

“Hear them! The people cheer them!”

he almost jumped at the sudden volume of sound that broke out from behind. One lightning glance showed him the banjo and mandolin men parading across the back of the stage in military file, holding their instruments before them like drums, upon which they beat in pantomime, and joining lustily in the song, with plenty of noise and a serene disregard of the words.

The pallor on Smith's face gave way to a burning flush, and with an angry jerk of his head he commanded all eyes to the front. But he knew those figures were still going through their ridiculous maneuvers though they had stopped singing.

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He could see the audience watching them. Then as the song softened down toward the end they came tip-toeing stealthily out in front, a chair in one hand, a mandolin or banjo in the other, and at the last faint note they were all seated, instruments ready and hands poised. At the final bob of Tod Smith's head they broke into the introduction of the closing ensemble before the audience had a chance for a single clap of applause.

When it was over Bill made for the outside door to snatch a smoke before the dancing began. He could hear the thunder of Tod Smith's wrath behind him—he had been made a goat of, and he was going to resign—he wouldn't belong to such an aggregation of infants—it was no way to treat the leader of the Glee Club and the president of the organization. Bill smiled at his sputtering, and smiled more broadly as he looked back over his shoulder and saw Smith of a sudden lean limply against the wall and bend double with hysterical laughter.

Bill lighted a cigarette and strolled out into the street. The air was chill, with the raw chill of November, and gray clouds covered the sky, but it was refreshing after the heat of indoors. The street was deserted, for all of Stanfield that was not abed was in the town-hall, waiting now for the seats to be shoved back from the floor so they

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could dance. Bill was not very keen about the dancing, and he prolonged his stroll, and turned a corner into the main street. He finished one cigarette and went into a dark doorway where the wind did not blow to light another. Just as he was about to strike the match he heard hurrying footsteps coming along the sidewalk, and almost immediately a tall figure hastened by. It was too dark to distinguish the face, but the man was hatless and coatless, and the white of his shirt bosom showed dimly as he passed. Bill started. He knew that figure. It was Colchester! The suspicion of secret doings, that had recurred to him more than once that day, seized him again. He stepped out of the shadow and followed.

Colchester passed under a street lamp, and suddenly turned into the only lighted place on that side of the street. Bill went near enough to see that it was the telegraph office, and then stopped, his heart thumping excitedly.

"I'm right! I'm right!" went singing through his brain. "She's here—here in Effie's barn!"

Then he turned abruptly and ran back. There must be something doing—perhaps they were taking her away! As he ran he tried to plan how he could see her, for see her he would, some way, before she was gone. He did not stop running till he was back at the hall.

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The dancing had begun and Bill thought he could steal in, find his hat and coat, and get away again without being noticed. He had already formed a rather vague plan of going back to Colchester's house and getting into the barn—a proceeding which in the excitement of the chase did not seem at all a questionable thing to do. The only thing he could think of was that here was a chance, perhaps, of doing what no man had ever done before—of seeing Sabrina in her hiding place. He wanted nothing more than that. He wouldn't even tell anyone about it, at least for quite a while; but to succeed where others had continually failed for years and years—it set his pulse to pounding madly.

But getting away was not so simple. There were three or four fellows in the room where his things were, Gray among them, and Gray hailed him.

“The small cousin is looking for you, Bill,” he said. “She has an idea you're going to dance with her.”

“Thunder, Tommy! I don't want to dance! I can't dance anyway!”

“Well, go and talk to her then. I told her I'd find you for her.”

Bill sighed resignedly and made for the hall. The small cousin was plainly waiting for him.

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"Oh, Mr. Bill, it was perfectly splendid!" she cried. For some reason she seemed to have picked out Bill from the trio of Effie's guests to be her particular friend. At any rate, toward him her earlier shyness had completely vanished, and she smiled radiantly at him as he sat down beside her. "Now you're going to ask me to dance with you, aren't you?" she inquired frankly.

"Sure; only if you say 'yes' I'm afraid you'll be sorry. I'm not much of a dancer."

"I think you're joking. I'm going to say 'yes' anyway. I'm just crazy about dancing."

"Come on, then! But you don't know how courageous you are. What is this—a two-step?"

"Stupid! It's a waltz, and you knew it all the time!"

Whether he had been joking or not, Bill managed to put up a pretty miserable exhibition of waltzing. The small cousin bit her lip and looked up at him with a suspicious eye, but he seemed to be trying so hard and was so in earnest in his failures not to bump into people that she finally took pity on him and stopped it.

"I told you," he said apologetically. "I can't ever make my feet go where they ought to go."

"Never mind, we can talk. The music is stopping anyway." So they sat down and started to talk, while Bill was consumed with a most impolite de-

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sire to get up and run away. "Oh, there's Mr. Chanler! We have the next dance together. Do you know, I'm frightened to death I'll call him 'Butt' some time. It's the loveliest name for him. Don't you think he's cute?"

Bill laughed. "Just say that to Butt and he'll hate you for life. I think Butt wouldn't mind being hanged if it would only stretch him out and make him six inches taller. He's terribly sensitive about being so little."

"Oh, I won't say anything about it to him!" she said earnestly.

"Hello, Butt! I've been giving Miss Colchester an awful time. It's up to you to make up for it."

"It wasn't awful at all," she protested, rising as the music started. "It is hard to dance here, there's such a crowd."

Bill did not wait to dispute with her, he rushed precipitately for the dressing room and thanked his stars there was no one there to detain him further. He grabbed his coat and hat and hurried out, putting them on as he went.

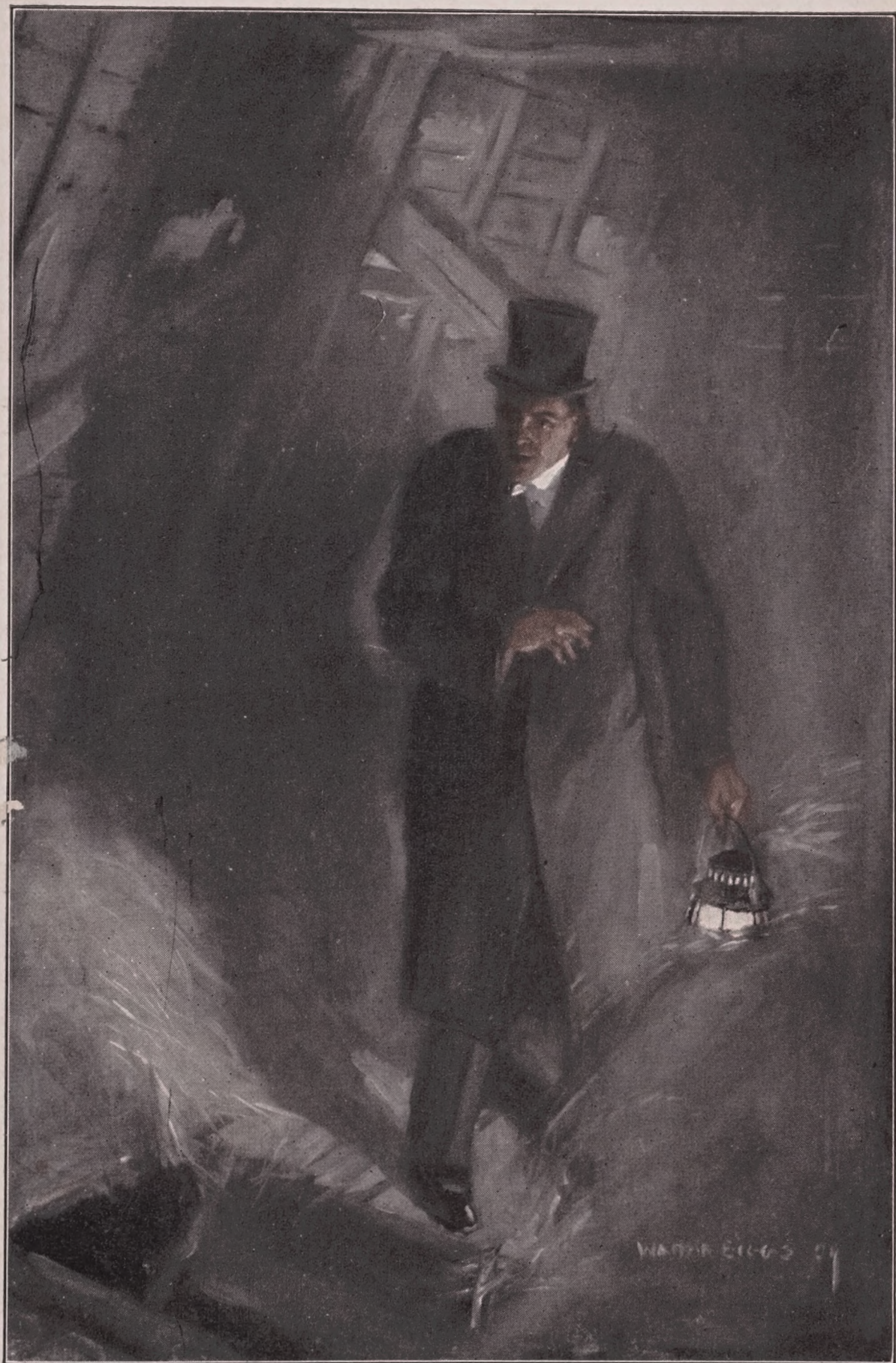
The Colchesters lived over a mile from the center of the town. Bill found there was a light in the house, but the barn was dark and deserted. It stood some distance from the house, and he circled it carefully, looking for some way to get in, but

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he did not dare strike a match and it was slow work. The big front door was securely fastened, as well as all the windows, but at length, after stumbling around in a sort of carriage-shed built alongside, he ventured to strike a light and discovered a ladder. With great care he dragged it out, making no noise at all, and set it up against a door on the second floor—the door through which the hay was pitched. After climbing up he found this, too, was locked, but near it was a window that stuck and squeaked, but finally yielded to his pushing. He looked about once more at the quiet house, and climbed in.

He lighted another match and peered around. He was in what had apparently once been used for the stableman's bedroom, and Bill had a sudden fear that there might be a stableman in the barn even now. But he could not remember having seen one during the day: he even remembered that Effie had said something about their having to walk to town because the stable was out of commission. Anyway, he was not going to back out now for anything short of an armed resistance.

There was a cot bed along the wall, and on a shelf, with a looking-glass and an old hair brush, a dusty stable lantern. He pounced upon it and shook it—there was still oil in it! In an instant he had it lighted and was out of the room.



“He sprang back, screening the lantern with his coat.”

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He found himself in a large hay loft, where huge shadows swelled and towered at each swing of the lantern. The thick smell of hay filled his nostrils, and every footstep stirred up a flurry of dust that set him coughing. There seemed to be hay everywhere, great stacks of it on each side of him, piled up to the roof, and between, an empty alleyway down which he now moved cautiously, holding the lantern at arm's length.

He realized his search would be hopeless if the statue was hidden up here. It might be buried anywhere in that mass of hay. In the short time that he had, he might as well be hunting for a needle.

Suddenly he stopped, on the verge of a yawning hole directly in his path. For a moment it startled him; then he saw that it must be the place where they pitched the hay into the stalls. As he peered down, trying to direct the light so that he could see what was below, a heavy sound startled him. He sprang back, screening the lantern with his coat. He listened, a thrill quivering up and down his spine. It came again, a hollow, shivery sound as of some one striking heavily upon wood. A terror of something unknown seized him, and he frantically wrapped the lantern in his coat to shut out every ray of light.

Then he broke into a nervous laugh. It was only a horse downstairs! The light had probably

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disturbed it, and the sound was its foot striking on the floor. Bill wiped the sweat from his forehead with the back of his hand and moved on. He would look downstairs.

At length he found the way down. The light caused some more commotion, but Bill paid no further attention to it. There was only one horse: the other stalls were either empty or filled with rubbish.

He looked carefully everywhere else and came back to the stalls. If it wasn't upstairs, under the hay, it must be here, and if it wasn't here he couldn't find it. He stopped to listen for a moment. With all his caution and slow progress he had been over an hour. It must be almost time for the others to be coming home. Well, let them come. He hung the lantern on a hook and began his search.

The first stall revealed nothing but a lot of farm tools and behind them some old, discarded furniture, and he went on to the next. At the first glance his heart leaped. It contained a lot of boxes, and one bigger than the rest with a piece of old carpet thrown over it. He grabbed off the covering and took down the lantern to look closer.

The box must have been put there lately, for it was not packed in like the others. Eagerly he bent over it, measuring it with his eye. It seemed to

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be the right size. It was much scratched and battered, as if it had traveled far. There were iron bands around it, and one side, partly wedged in among the other boxes, was screwed on. On the front were big smears of paint, as if some old lettering had been painted over, and on the side—he squeezed himself into the stall to see better—there were more letters:

“F. E. COLCHESTER, Stanfield, Mass.”

Printed across the corner was the word “*Clocks.*”

As he read it he laughed aloud and jumped back. A box of clocks for Effie Colchester! It was a joke. It was too easy!

He flung off his coat and hat, letting them fall unheeded on the floor, and began hunting for something to use as a screwdriver. An old sickle with a blunted end was the best he could find, and with it he went to work.

It was slow business, but one by one he removed the screws. He finished the front row of them, and then he had to move some of the other boxes to get at the screws in the back. That was a ticklish job, for he had to be careful not to set the whole pile tumbling over on him. Then he braced himself to shift the box around.

At the first shove his heart sank. It moved without any difficulty at all. Feverishly he attacked

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the remaining screws. At last one of the broad boards was free and toppled over against him. For an instant he hesitated, and then thrust in his hand. The box was empty.

He leaned limply back against the wall. He could have wept, but instead he giggled hysterically. Fooled! Effie had seen through him all along, and had played this joke on him!

Then he sat down and began to think. No, it couldn't be a joke. Effie had been deadly serious when he spoke to him, and he wouldn't be telegraphing about a joke: Meredith wouldn't have sent him that note about a joke. The statue had really been here, and somehow, in some secret manner, Colchester had got it away again. Perhaps Effie had been seeing that it was packed securely when he visited the barn in the afternoon with the hammer. And then, when they had all gone to the concert, it had been taken away. That's what Effie had been telegraphing about!

He got up wearily. He must put things as he had found them. Now, more than ever, he did not want anyone to know he had been prying around for the hidden statue. He replaced the board and the screws, and piled the boxes up again. Then he gathered up his coat and hat and went back to the room upstairs. When he had blown out the lantern and climbed out on the ladder he suddenly heard

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voices singing far down the road—Effie's voice, and Butt's, and the shrill treble of the girls:

"If you want to go to Tresham,
Just come along with me,
By the light, by the light of the moon."

He had replaced the ladder and was sitting on the front steps when the others reached the house.

"Oh, here's Mr. Bill!" exclaimed Mildred.

"We've had a glorious time!"

"What's the matter, Bill?" cried Colchester anxiously. "We looked everywhere for you. We couldn't think what in the deuce had become of you."

"I wasn't feeling very well. I thought I'd come on ahead."

"Oh, you'll feel better when you get something to eat. Mother said she'd leave some lunch out for us."

"If you don't mind, I think I'd like to go to bed," Bill said as they stopped in the hall and Colchester turned up the light.

"You're sick, Bill! You're white as a sheet. I'll call mother and have her get something for you."

"No, no. I just want to go to bed. I'll be all right in the morning." And he started up the stairs. "Please don't bother about me. I'm all right, really. Good night."

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But Colchester insisted on going upstairs with him, and hovered over him till he was safe in bed.

"Sure I can't do something for you, Bill? I'm awfully sorry!"

Bill forced a smile. His chief feeling at that moment was that he was thoroughly ashamed of himself.

"Don't worry about me, Effie. You're awfully good. I guess I'm just tired out."

Colchester turned down the light and left him.

"Be sure and let me know if you want anything."

"Yes; good night." And Bill turned over and hid his face in the pillow.

CHAPTER VIII

A TROUBLOUS INTERLUDE

BILL was all right the next morning, just as he had said he would be, but they made a lot of fuss over him to which he had to submit as gracefully as he could. It was the penalty for retreating to bed as he had the night before. He wore a subdued air, which they took for illness, but it was really because he was afflicted with remorse. On sober reflection it seemed pretty poor business, breaking into the Colchesters' barn like a thief while he was a guest at their house. Perhaps he would not have looked at it so soberly if he had found what he was looking for. But as it was, the disappointment had a chastening effect, and now that the excitement was all over and had amounted to nothing, he told himself he had been a prying fool. Maybe that box had never held the statue at all. Nevertheless, he felt sure it had.

They left on an early afternoon train for the next concert, and the cousins went with them as far as the next town, where they lived. Bill had

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an additional touch of remorse because he had deceived the younger one about his dancing. She had been particularly nice to him all that morning: she was so sorry he was not well! And though he did not tell her she was a "nice kid," that was what he thought, and in the way he meant it, it was the finest compliment he could pay her.

The concert that night was not a highly successful one. It rained for one thing, a chill November rain that kept people away, and they were in a town where none of the fellows had any particular friends to stir up enthusiasm for them. Tod Smith was grouchy; he swore he'd never heard the club sing so badly—which didn't help matters—and the whole thing dragged itself through in a spiritless fashion that made them all glad when it was over.

The next morning they were routed out of bed before daylight to take an early train that would get them back to Tresham in time for chapel. The Thanksgiving recess was over, and it was back to work till the Christmas holidays.

Bill did not return in very gay spirits. He had made up his mind to dismiss Sabrina from his thoughts for good and all, but the sting of disappointment stayed by him and would not be banished. He had been so sure that he was on the right track: he was still sure he had been, and to have it all fizzle out so hurt his pride. He argued with

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himself that, no matter how acute he had been, the result could not have been any different—the statue simply wasn't there for him to find; but that was small comfort. To have come so near, and then miss, was almost heartbreaking. He tried to be philosophical and say that even if he had succeeded he would have gained nothing. It would do him no good to find Sabrina, for he was a Sabrina man himself, bound in honor not to betray the secret of her hiding place even if he knew it. But that was not the point. He was not looking to gain anything. It was the hunt for the hunt's sake that had drawn him on, and the secret pride of having succeeded would have been his reward.

He kept thinking and puzzling over the mystery of that empty box. How long had it been empty? Had Colchester's visit to the barn that afternoon, taking him away from their merry-making, had anything to do with it? If so, what? But there was no use in speculating on it. He had come as near as he could to answering questions of that kind: not once in years was such luck even as he had had likely to come to anyone, and it would not come to him again. He had better get what satisfaction there was out of having made as much as he could out of it. But he could not help finding that rather cold satisfaction at best.

That afternoon he learned that Colchester had

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not returned with the clubs, which set him speculating anew. The obvious explanation was that he had gone back home for Sunday: that was what everyone thought. But just now Bill was not in a frame of mind to accept obvious explanations. He had it on the authority of Sherlock Holmes himself that the deepest of mysteries were often to be found beneath the most commonplace, every-day kind of happenings, and in his present absorption in the secret of Sabrina's whereabouts he would have seen a hidden meaning even in the mere fact that Colchester might chance to go uptown on the right-hand side of the street instead of the left.

He spent a good deal of time regretting that he had not kept a more watchful eye on Colchester after that fruitless venture into the barn. If he had only been more alert instead of foolishly losing all his enthusiasm simply because he had run up against a temporary failure, he might have discovered a clue really worth while. Why hadn't he seen when Effie left them, and found out all the whys and wherefores of it? Was it immediately after the concert or the next morning? And where had he really gone?

But after all Bill was not the sort of fellow to waste much time on what might have been. Once he saw that there was really nothing to be done, he stopped regretting and tried to put it out of

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mind, with a tiny hope tucked away in the bottom of him that something might turn up after all that would make it all right.

Colchester came back Monday morning, big and serene as ever, and anxious in a friendly way about the state of Bill's health. And Bill had to protest all over again that there was nothing the matter with him. There were kindly messages from the Colchester family, and Bill had to admit that if Effie hadn't been home over Sunday he was a very successful deceiver—which didn't seem at all like Effie.

At length it became clear that, as far as any likelihood of his discovering it went, there was nothing doing in the Sabrina line at all, and Bill sensibly gave up bothering about it. He could not be forever spying upon Effie Colchester, and a little serious thought showed him that even if he could it would be a mean return for the friendship the senior was giving him, especially when his sole object was to satisfy a curiosity about something that was after all not any of his business.

Besides, there were other things to think about. Just before Christmas the despised Herbie Nichols came to the fore again, and because Chanler and Burnet were concerned, it concerned Bill.

Nichols had not been having a very happy time. Though the sophomores who knew of it had agreed

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to say nothing about Nichols's little joke on his classmates in the early fall, he had not been able to keep Rowson silent for very long, and after a time the details of McCarthy's kidnapping became pretty generally known. If Nichols had been a different kind of fellow that probably would not have amounted to anything. It might even have seemed as funny as he intended it to be. But Nichols was unfortunately just what he was, not likable at best, and with what good points he did have so effectually concealed that most people never took the trouble to ferret them out. He was not bright. He had come to Tresham because he had flunked out of Harvard the spring before, and was a sophomore only on probation. He was not attractive in any way; he had no accomplishments at all, social, athletic, or intellectual, and he was hopelessly given to talking a great deal and very loudly about things that were utterly uninteresting—very often about himself.

Coming to Tresham without any friends at all, and getting in wrong with Chanler and McCarthy at the very first, it was not strange that he found it hard to make a place for himself that was worth anything. Butt and Mac were probably the two most popular men in the class, Butt simply because he could not help it, and Mac because in addition to being a good fellow he was the star pitcher on the

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baseball team and the winner of many a crucial game on the diamond. Either one of them, by merely being friendly, could have done a lot for Nichols, for where they led others followed. But their attitude was decidedly the opposite, and though they did not intentionally show it, it was plain enough to anyone who saw much of them. The result was that Nichols had to seek companions among those to whom Butt's and Mac's likes and dislikes made no difference at all, and so great was the hold of these two upon their classmates that such ones were pretty few and of the kind that one would not willingly make special cronies of.

Whatever Nichols's shortcomings were, he saw plainly enough that he was not making any headway with the fellows who amounted to anything in his own class, and out of sheer loneliness he one day gathered together his belongings and had them carted up to a vacant room in the Dorms. He belonged to no fraternity and no one he cared about ever came to his room, so there was nothing to do but go where he could at least be among a crowd, if not of it.

The room he took was on the same floor as Burnet's, and Burnet, because he had an exceedingly kind heart, was nice to his new neighbor. Poor Nichols responded gratefully, and if he did not exactly blossom under the new treatment, he at

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least showed that he was not altogether what Hawkins had once called him—a “mutt.” He poured forth the tale of his loneliness to this kindly freshman, who was too polite not to listen even if he had not felt rather sorry for his visitor, with the result that Nichols went back to his own room late that night feeling that at last he had found a friend. Later on Burnet was inclined to wish he had not been so sympathetic, for Nichols got to coming often and staying long, and, at best, too big doses of him got tiresome. Besides, other friends of his looked askance at this new companionship: they even went further and started criticizing it.

“What in thunder do you have that fruit hanging around all the time for?” they asked. But that made Burnet stubborn, and he was more friendly to Nichols than ever.

At length Butt got wind of it, and in his rôle of adviser and old friend he, too, protested.

“Now what’s the use of talking like that, Butt?” Burnet answered. “You know me well enough to know it won’t do any good. It isn’t doing me or anyone else any harm to be decent to him.”

“I didn’t say it was. But it’s such a waste of time. I should think you’d have found out that he isn’t your kind from just the little time he passed himself off as a classmate of yours.”

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"Of course you think that, and that's what is so unfair. That man has had a downright miserable time all the fall, and just because you all judged him by that one thing and decided he was no good. You know that a new man hasn't any chance of getting in with the nice fellows in your class when he starts in with your crowd and McCarthy's down on him the first thing, especially when he—well, when he's like Nichols."

"But doesn't that prove he's no good? We haven't said anything against him, and if he had anything to him he'd make friends fast enough. That's what I mean when I say you're wasting your time."

Burnet shrugged his shoulders.

"I'll admit he's pretty far from being a star, but that isn't admitting that I'm wasting my time. My time is my own, and I should feel like a rotten old snob if I didn't try to be halfway decent to him. Lord knows he's lonely enough: nobody else has anything to do with him, and it's a good deal your fault."

"I'd like to know how you make that out!" cried Butt indignantly.

"I've told you already, and you know it just as well as I do."

"Would you mind saying it over again?" Butt spoke with the restrained calm of one who argues

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with an unreasonable child. "I may be stupid, but I didn't catch your point."

"That's right—get sore! What I said was that you queered him at the very beginning, and he knows it. There isn't a man in your class he'd rather have like him than you."

Butt was silent. To tell the truth, he had never thought of his popularity as a thing that had any special influence. He knew that the fellows apparently all liked him, and he was proud of it, but it had never occurred to him that their liking might lead them so far as to make them accept his judgment of anybody without having some grounds to form the same judgment on their own account. It seemed impossible and ridiculous. The fact that he and his classmates had agreed so unanimously about Nichols was proof positive that they were right—he simply was not worth while.

But in spite of his certainty of this, Burnet's words had some result. Butt always wanted to be fair, and rather than have Nichols feel, however unjustly, that he had been exercising a hostile influence, he resolved to do what he could to make amends.

"I know you're wrong, Bunny," he said. "At least about my having made any difference. That's all rot. But if it will ease your mind any I'll seek out your man and make peace with him. I don't

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want any shattered careers on my conscience even when it's all imagination."

And he straightway went to Nichols and was what Burnet would have called "decent" to him. Nichols was surprised and so humbly grateful that Butt came away feeling that he had wronged the man, and determined to make up for it.

So things began to look up for the lone sophomore. He did not find himself any more sought after than before, but to be on friendly terms with Butt Chanler, even if he did not see so very much of him, was a great comfort, for to him Butt seemed one of the finest fellows that ever trod the earth. And he knew that he owed it all to Burnet, and his gratitude took the form of haunting Burnet's room all the more, which wore on even that kind-hearted freshman at times. But Burnet continued to defend him as stoutly as ever when anyone took it upon himself to make remarks. Both he and Butt had to put up with a good deal of joshing about their "crush."

So Bill came to see more or less of Nichols, too. He could not easily help it when he went to the Dorms to see Burnet, for Nichols seemed to be perpetually there. For Burnet's sake he made no comment, and successfully concealed the fact that he thought Nichols the most tiresome man he had ever known. But Nichols was keen enough when it came

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to discovering whether people liked him or not; he even realized that there was a touch of toleration in Butt's attitude toward him, and he saw plainly that for all his politeness Bill wished he would keep out of the way. All of which aroused a certain streak of malice in him, and made him keep in the way as much as he could.

Suddenly, out of this tiresome but seemingly harmless association, burst a small-sized thunderbolt.

Bill had gone up to Burnet's room one evening. The Christmas vacation was only three days away, and he had been waiting to hear from his family before deciding whether to go home for the holidays or to stay East and spend part of them with Butt and Burnet. A letter had just come from his father.

He found Burnet working hard at a new typewriter. Having literary aspirations, Bunny wished to own all the tools of the trade, and this latest purchase was at least useful in making his themes legible.

"You'd save time by using both hands," observed Bill after he had watched Burnet for a few minutes laboriously picking out the letters with one forefinger.

"Probably, but I'm going to learn this way first," was the serene response.

"Oh, very well, I don't mind." Bill sauntered over to the fireplace and dropped another stick of wood on the fire. "Nice dry wood you have."

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No response at all this time.

"A fire is very cheerful to-night. It's quite chilly out."

Still Burnet kept pegging at his machine.

"Well, I guess I'll be moving along. I just dropped in to tell you that it would give me great pleasure to accept your kind invitation for Christmas and that——"

"Oh, Billy! Good work!" Burnet jumped up from his typewriter, all enthusiasm. "Did you hear from home?"

"Yes. The folks are coming on to New York the first of the week. And say, don't you suppose you and Butt can go down for New Year's? They say that's always a big time in New York, and I want you and the folks to know each other, my kid brother especially. He may come to Tresham in a couple of years, if the old gent is satisfied with the way I do here."

Burnet looked thoughtfully into the fire.

"Gee, I'd like to. You know I've never been to New York. Have you asked Butt yet?"

"I haven't had a chance. He's gone to one of his old Honor System meetings and I didn't get this letter till after supper. Say, Bunny, it'll be great fun if you can go!"

And they talked at length about what they would do if they went to New York and what they would

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do at Burnet's home, till finally Bill remembered that he had work to do and must get back to his room.

"By the way," he remarked as he stood with his hand on the doorknob, ready to go, "what's the matter with your friend Herbie to-night?"

"Nothing that I know of. Why?"

"Oh, he isn't around. I thought something must be the trouble. Well, good night. Don't try to write that letter home on your typewriter. You want to get it off some time this week."

Out in the hall he met Butt on his way to Burnet's room.

"Just the man I want!" he exclaimed. "Going in to see Bunny?"

"Yes. Wait for me, won't you? I want to see you, too—afterwards."

"I'm going home with you for Christmas," Bill said eagerly, turning back with him, "and you and Bunny have got to go down to New York with me later—the folks are going to be there!"

Butt said something about how glad he was, and maybe he could go, but when they were inside and seated around the fire again, it was Bill and Burnet that did most of the talking and planning.

"Wake up, Butt!" exclaimed Bill after a few minutes. "Haven't you any interest at all?"

"Sure I have. I know we'll have a good time.

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We'll see Walter Welles, too. You don't know him but you'll like him. He started in with our class last fall. He was class president while he was here, but his father died and he had to leave."

"Show a little enthusiasm then: you act as though you didn't care. Oh, thunder!" he exclaimed, lowering his voice, for the door had opened and Nichols entered. "I knew he'd show up!"

Nichols's coming put an end to their planning and Bill and Butt got up to go.

"Oh, Bunny, how's the work going?" asked Butt, picking up something from the mantel and making a pretense of examining it.

"All right, I guess," was the casual response. Burnet was preparing to sit down at the typewriter again.

"Math bothering you any?"

"Math always bothers me, but I think I'm above the passing mark."

"Haven't you been having some tests lately?"

"Oh, we have them all the time. We had one—let's see—Tuesday, wasn't it, Herb?"

Nichols nodded. He had had to repeat Freshman Math this year.

"I flunked it dead," Burnet added. "Have they been reporting me down in it?"

"No, not exactly. But we fellows down at the

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house have to keep track of the kind of work you freshmen do." Butt spoke hurriedly, and started for the door. "Good night!" he said, and hastened out.

Bill had to run down the stairs to keep up with him.

"What's the matter with you, Butt?" he demanded, catching up with him as they reached the walk outside.

Butt did not answer at once.

"What do you think of Bunny?" he asked suddenly.

"Think of him? Why, I think he's all right, of course. I like him a lot."

"You think he's straight and square, don't you?"

Bill stopped short and took Butt by the arm.

"What's the matter with you? What's up?" he cried.

"Oh, I'll tell you. I've got to tell somebody, and you—Bill, you can find out things the rest of us can't, sometimes, just fooling. For Heaven's sake, see if you can't do it in something that counts. This means a lot!"

"But tell me what it is!"

"You know the Honor System committee had a meeting to-night, and you know what that means."

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"Some one's been caught cribbing? It wasn't——" He stopped.

"Yes: it was Bunny."

"Well, he didn't do it. You can bet on that!"

"I know he didn't. Why, I've known Bunny Burnet ever since we were kids. It isn't in him to do a thing like that! But it looks as though he did."

Bill shook his head in exasperation.

"Don't you suppose I could guess that much, if it has gone into the committee's hands? What I want to know is all about it. When did it happen? Who thinks he did it?"

"The Math instructor, and the rest of the committee."

Bill said nothing, but waited.

"I haven't any right to be telling you this. We aren't supposed to tell what goes on in the committee meetings—but I've got to do something! Can't you help me, Bill? You've got to help me! I got them to agree not to do anything just yet because I know him so well and I'm so sure of him. They're going to let me investigate a little. But there isn't much time; they won't wait forever."

"Why didn't you ask Bunny himself? Probably he could clear up the whole thing."

"I was going to to-night—that's what I went up to his room for. But I couldn't get up my nerve to, and then Nichols came in. I couldn't then anyway."

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But you heard me ask about that test. If there's been anything unusual about that he'd have spoken about it, or at least shown it. Bunny can't be mixed up in anything that's crooked without showing it the first thing."

They were outside Mrs. Sleeper's and Butt stopped till they were upstairs in Bill's room. But then he seemed disinclined to go on; he just sat glumly in a chair, saying nothing.

"Who found it out?" asked Bill.

"The professor—and he reported it."

"But I thought this Honor System business was all run by the students and the faculty kept out."

"They do, except when they come across a case where it's perfectly plain, or at least pretty suspicious, and then they have to report it to the student committee. After that it's in the students' hands. They investigate it, and if they find it really seems to be a case of cribbing they give the man a chance to clear himself if he can, and if he can't they report him to the faculty and recommend what they think ought to be done to him."

"How about this case?"

"Oh, it's cribbing, all right. It was in that Math test last Tuesday. Bunny's work has been poor for some time, but the professor likes him and he's been trying to help him outside of the class and make him buck up. When he came to correct these papers he

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found Bunny's was a mighty good one—they'd been given five problems, but only four were required, and Bunny had the answers to four of them right. The professor was pleased, but he was surprised, and he started to look over the work. He found that the last part of every single problem had been erased and done over again, and the part that was done over was copied."

"How does he know that? Bunny might have worked them over again without copying them."

"But the working over didn't fit on to the first part at all. It's plain enough that the things were copied."

Bill snorted with impatience.

"Rot! How do you know they were copied?"

"They look as if they had been."

"Butt Chanler, you've lost every smack of common sense you ever had—and the whole thing looks to me as though your Math man had run into trouble on pretty slim evidence. What kind of evidence do you call that? Why, it's just another proof that they're mistaken. If Bunny ever did take to cribbing, he'd do it intelligently. He wouldn't leave part of his own work and part of another man's that didn't fit together."

"But it was Bunny's book, all right. I saw it."

Bill sat for a few moments thinking, while Butt got up and walked nervously back and forth.

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"Do you know whose paper the problems were copied from?" he asked at length.

"No. It might have been anybody's that had the problems done right."

"But you said one of them was wrong. Was that one copied, too?"

"I suppose so, if the others were. I'm not sure."

Bill stood up.

"You ought to have looked through all the other papers and found the one that had that same wrong problem done in the same wrong way."

Butt stopped his pacing, and gripped the back of a chair excitedly.

"I never thought of that!" he cried. Then the hopeful look died out of his face. "But what good would it do anyway? We'd know the man it was copied from, but that wouldn't help us."

"It might. Maybe those problems weren't copied. Bunny may have done them on another piece of paper and then copied the last part of 'em without changing the first parts. Perhaps that's all he had time to do. Perhaps—Oh, all sorts of things! The sensible thing would be to ask Bunny himself. He probably could explain the whole thing."

"Oh, I know that. But I hate to have him know that's he's even suspected of such a thing! I want to clear it up myself if I can."

"Well, maybe—— Can't you get hold of

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those papers? We might make something out of them."

Butt drew out his watch.

"Half past nine. You wait! I'll get 'em if I can. I think Morty 'll let me take 'em: he wants to see Bunny cleared as much as anyone."

Butt did not wait to put on his overcoat. He grabbed his cap and dashed out of the room. It was nearly an hour before he returned, with a pile of blue-covered notebooks under his arm.

"I've got 'em!" he cried, out of breath.

"Did you have to get out a warrant for them?"

"No; I went up to see Bunny first. I thought he might be able to explain it, after all, and there wouldn't be anything else to do. But he can't."

"What did he say?"

Butt pulled out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead.

"Nichols was there and I had to ask him to get out, and then I told Bunny. He says he did the problems over several times, and did a lot of erasing. But he got 'em different every time, and he's pretty sure he didn't get the right answers any time. If he did, it was just luck: he didn't copy from anybody else. He says he couldn't have, anyway, without being seen, because there were several fellows still at work there when he got discouraged and quit. He's terribly excited about it. He swears

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there's some mistake, and he wanted to go right down to Professor Mortimer's and thresh it out to-night, but I got him to wait till to-morrow."

Bill picked up the top blue book.

"Let's look at them. If we can't find another that's just like his, it's pretty good proof that his wasn't copied. Where's his book?"

Butt picked it out from the pile and Bill looked at it.

"He had the third problem wrong. What we want is to find another fellow that had this same problem done the same way."

"I hope we won't find any!" said Butt fervently, and they began their search.

For twenty minutes the quick turning of pages was the only sound in the room. Then Butt seized Burnet's paper suddenly, and a moment later uttered a sharp cry.

"What is it?" cried Bill.

"There it is!" Butt threw down the two books with a despairing gesture.

Bill picked them up and compared them carefully.

"They're exactly alike," he said at length. "Everything—except the parts he didn't erase."

Butt said nothing; he simply stared at Bill in glum silence.

"Who is this man Hopper—the one they were

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—well, the one it looks as though they were copied from? ”

“ Oh, I know him. He’s a shark. He gets A’s in everything. Will you blame them for suspecting Bunny now? He had every reason to crib, and the other man didn’t, and there’s about as much evidence as anyone could want.”

Bill made no answer, but took Burnet’s book closer to the light and stood studying it closely.

“ Butt! ” he called sharply. “ Come here! ”

Butt jumped to his side.

“ Look—at that ‘ x ’ there. Now look at this other. See? ” He pointed eagerly, and Butt put his head down close to examine. “ Bunny made that one, and he didn’t make this. See the difference? Bunny’s is a plain, clean cross, and this other one has a loop, all made without taking the pencil off the paper. Look, they’re all like that in the part that was copied.”

Butt stared for a moment, and then a smile appeared and grew on his face.

“ Then he didn’t do it! ” he cried.

“ Of course he didn’t! ” Bill beamed triumphantly.

Butt dropped the book and sat down, his eyes radiant.

“ By golly! ” he exclaimed softly. “ I’m glad! ”

They sat and looked at each other, and smiled,

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and then laughed. At length Butt sprang to his feet.

"We must tell him," he cried. "He'll be lying awake thinking about it. We mustn't make him wait till morning before he knows it's all cleared up."

Together they hurried out of the room and down the stairs, leaving the light still burning, and dashed hatless into the street. But they had only reached the foot of the campus hill when they met Burnet, hurrying, hatless, too, to their room.

"Oh, I've been down to the house and everywhere looking for you!" he cried. "I want to talk about it! But the other fellows didn't know and I—I somehow couldn't tell them."

"Cheer up, Bunny!" exclaimed Butt joyfully. "You didn't do it!"

"I know I didn't, but they think I did, and that's just as bad."

"Come on back to the room," said Bill, linking arms with the other two. "We can prove you didn't do it. That ought to hold them!"

"How?" Burnet questioned eagerly.

"Easiest thing in the world: just by comparing your letters and figures with the ones that were copied."

"But there wasn't anything copied. All the letters and figures in my book were my own!"

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"No, they weren't! You wait till you see them."

They hurried him into the house and upstairs, and showed him the book.

"Are they, now?" Butt asked.

Burnet needed only a glance at the paper.

"But who did it?" he demanded.

"I don't know, but it was copied from Hopper's paper—you can see it's just the same, mistakes and all."

A slow flush mounted Burnet's face.

"Do you think—" He stopped, as if the very thought was hard to utter. "Some one—do you think some one dislikes me so much that he's tried this way to get me into trouble?"

They had not thought of that, they were so glad to have found proof of Burnet's innocence.

"Of course not. You haven't an enemy in the world, Bunny! But what would anybody want to do such a thing for?" Butt knew the idea was ridiculous, but it grew on him. What other explanation was there?

"We'll find out, if it was anybody in the class," Bill cried, seizing the pile of books. "Go through them all: start at the beginning, and look for some 'x's' like these. That may track him."

Feverishly they went at the blue books again, studying and comparing, starting with the beginning of the alphabet. Burnet was the one to find the

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first striking similarity. Long and carefully he compared the letters and figures in the book he held with those in his own book. Then he laid them both down, open, on the table.

"There it is," he said. His flushed face had paled and he spoke in a voice that was curiously calm and repressed.

Together Bill and Butt bent over the two books.

"By George, it is!" Bill started to turn over the book to see the name on the front, but Burnet snatched it away and put it behind him.

"Whose is it?"

Burnet stared at them for a moment, coldly and defiantly. Then in a sudden burst of anger he hurled the book at the wall.

"I don't care who knows it!" he shouted, his voice rising and breaking. "He's played me dirty! It's Nichols!"

They simply stared at him, as he stood with fists clenched and eyes filling. Then Bill went over and picked up the book.

"It is Nichols," he said. "Herbert P. Nichols."

For minutes, almost, the three stood there, and no one said a word. Then Burnet relaxed his tense attitude and sat down in a chair.

"I don't see why he did it," he said brokenly.

"Well, I'll find out!" cried Butt, stepping forward resolutely. "I'll find out to-night!"

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“Wait a minute!” Burnet reached out his hand as if to stop him. “I want to think a minute.”

“Think! There’s no two ways of thinking about this thing at all. He did it. There’s the proof! I don’t know what dirty, mean purpose he had underneath it all, but he did it all right. And he’ll get what’s coming to him for it!”

“Wait!” Burnet repeated. And they waited, while he sat there thinking, his elbows on the table and his hands clutching his hair. “I can’t make it out,” he said finally. “I can’t see why he did it. Why, he was in again after Butt was up; and I told him about it. And he never gave a sign! But don’t do anything to-night—please don’t. See him in the morning, and— What will they do to him?”

“Fire him!” said Butt decidedly.

“See him in the morning and tell him they will fire him, and try to get him to go himself. Don’t you see? I don’t want people to know he’s done this thing to me! It’s bad enough to have him do it, but I don’t want people to know!”

“Well, you are a funny one! What’s the harm of that? He deserves it!” exclaimed Butt.

“I think I see,” said Bill. “Do that, Butt! See him to-morrow, and tell him the case is as plain as day against him, and get him to leave quietly without any having to. You can make him if anyone can.”

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“But that’s so—so—I don’t see the object of it!”

“It’ll make it easier for Bunny if people don’t know about it. Don’t you see? Bunny’s been his friend, the best friend he’s had here, and it isn’t very pleasant to have everybody know a fellow you’ve gone out of your way to be decent to has turned and played you a dirty trick like that.”

Butt saw, dimly, though it seemed more to him as if Burnet dreaded the inevitable “I told you so” than anything else. But he didn’t blame him for that, and he agreed to what they asked.

“Can I stay down here to-night, Bill?” asked Burnet wearily. “I don’t want to go back to the Dorms.”

“Sure: you can have either the couch or the bed.”

“I’ll take the couch. And I think I’ll go to bed now.”

And to bed he went, and the other two talked in whispers so as not to disturb him. But it was long after Butt had gone and Bill had gone to bed himself before Bunny went to sleep.

CHAPTER IX

THE BANQUET THEY DIDN'T HAVE

BURNET was pretty quiet when he got up the next morning, and Bill made no attempt to force conversation. He thought he understood, in a way, how Bunny felt. He also knew that there was only one thing either of them were thinking about, and it was foolish to pretend they were not by trying to talk of something else.

The night had not cleared things up especially for Burnet. His feelings had cooled a little, but in cooling they had hardened, which was not any pleasanter. He tried at times to turn his thoughts in another direction, but there was no dodging that one bitter, humiliating fact: he had been fooled into friendship by some one who had played on his good nature and sympathy only to turn against him in this unaccountable way in the end. And added to the humiliation was the bewilderment. What had Nichols to gain by saddling him with such a thing? Cribbing was a serious thing in Tresham. A man who was caught at it was expelled in short order.

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What good would it do Nichols to have him expelled? Had he been harboring some secret grudge, and was this his way of wiping it out? This was not so hard to believe as it might have been, for Burnet remembered unpleasant things that had happened in the Nichols-McCarthy episode early in the fall which, now that he thought of it, had never been explained away.

The whole business was sickening anyway, and Burnet only hoped that Nichols would be persuaded to leave without any public rumpus, and that he would not see him again before he left. So Bunny did not go to chapel that morning. After breakfast he went to the house, resolved to stay away from the Dorms even, till he heard that Nichols was gone.

There Butt found him an hour later. Butt looked very serious.

"Well," said Burnet shortly. "Will he go?"

"We've made a mistake, Bunny?" Butt said soberly.

"What? Didn't he do it?"

Burnet's face lighted eagerly, but the light died out again at Butt's response.

"Oh, he did it, but——" He paused, looking at Burnet. "We weren't fair to him."

"What does he say?"

"I haven't seen him. I couldn't find him."

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Meredith told me about it. He stopped me after chapel—he's the head of the Honor System Committee, you know—and said that Nichols came around to him last night and confessed the whole business."

Burnet stared at him.

"Did he—did he say why he did it?"

"Yes, and that's the funny part of it. It seems that right after he found out that you were in this mess he went straight down to Morty and told him the whole thing, and he sent him around to Merry. Merry called me up on the 'phone to tell me about it, but it was before I got back from Bill's."

"Did he want to get me into trouble?"

"No! That's where we weren't fair to him. We jumped right at that, as if he couldn't have been trying to do anything else. He was trying to help you!"

"Help me!"

"He knew you were down in Math. He was 'way down himself, too. He was the last one left in the room, and he saw what a fine chance it was to take some one else's paper and fix his problems right, so he copied Hopper's, and then he thought of you. He looked at your paper, and saw it was probably all wrong—it wasn't like Hopper's—so he changed yours, too. He had to do it in a hurry, so he didn't

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have time to do it so carefully. He never thought it might be found out and get you into trouble."

Burnet felt suddenly as if a great load had been lifted off him. He had not realized it, but his whole faith in friends and friendship had been ebbing away since this faithlessness of Nichols's, and now it came back in a surging rush.

"Poor Nick!" he exclaimed, his eyes shining.

"He's a poor, deluded fool," said Butt. "The whole business was foolishness, and the only thing in his favor was his good intentions. But I'm afraid they won't help him much."

"Why, will they punish him, now that he's confessed?"

"Why not? He cribbed, didn't he? Cribbed for himself and cribbed for you. There's no getting away from that."

There wasn't, apparently, so far as Burnet was able to see, but later in the day, when the Committee had met again, Butt was not so discouraging. He could not tell what was going to be done; he could not even tell what the recommendation of the Committee had been, but the case was now out of their hands and up to the faculty, and there was a chance, a bare chance, that it might not come out so badly as they had feared.

Burnet still rather dreaded seeing Nichols: it was hard to know what to say to him. But it turned

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out that Nichols was avoiding him, too, so Burnet went straight to Nichols's room and got the interview over. It was not especially hard once they got together, though Burnet found he could not be as frank as he had intended to be. He had meant to give Nichols a good talking to on the right and wrong things that could be done in the name of friendship, but he finally came away without doing anything of the kind, and considerably puzzled by the way Nichols evidently looked at such things. He seemed to be afflicted with a sort of moral blindness that made it hard to discuss this present matter with him according to ordinary standards. As far as the cribbing went, considered by itself, he could not see that it was wrong in his case—nor would it be in Burnet's, according to him—because he was not trying for high marks. He was simply trying to get through, which, unlike high marks, did not raise him in rank above any of his fellow-students and brought him no false honors. As to this particular case of cribbing, that which he had done for Burnet was entirely justified by the motives that prompted it. He had done it to help a friend, and to him that made it all right. Apparently he could have cheated, lied, anything, without a qualm of conscience, if he were only doing it to help some one for whom he cared.

Just now Burnet did not want to go into any very deep argument about these things. It would

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have to be conducted on too personal grounds, and it would involve talking about the way he and Nichols felt toward each other, and that Burnet shrank from.

It was decided that nothing more would be done in the Nichols case until after the holiday vacation, now only two days off. It had peculiar features that needed careful consideration, and the faculty postponed action till they should have time to deliberate more. So for the present none of the students knew about it except Burnet and Bill and the Committee.

Bill spent a merry Christmas in the little town where Butt and Burnet lived, and two days later went to New York to meet his family, where the other two joined him on the afternoon of New Year's Eve.

To all three of them New Year's Eve in New York was an entirely new experience. Welles, Butt's former classmate, was to meet them directly after dinner and show them the sights, but at the last moment he telephoned that he could not join them till ten o'clock, so they started out alone.

Early as it was when they reached Broadway it was already jammed with a merry, jostling crowd that surged up and down, back and forth, in a slow-moving stream apparently without beginning or end and without any aim except to keep on surging. The three linked arms to keep from being separated and

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let themselves drift with the current, very happy for a time just to watch the crowd. It was like a gigantic picnic where everybody knew everybody else and was glad to see everybody else, and no place for a man who was not on the best of jolly good terms with his fellow-men. The din was well-nigh deafening—horns bellowing, shrill mouth-whistles screeching, cow-bells jangling—and beneath it all the incessant undercurrent of merry thousands talking and laughing. Confetti fairly rained, until the street ran with it under foot as with a stream, and when one was not dodging confetti, one was dodging the feather ticklers that almost every other merry-maker kept thrusting into his neighbor's face.

It was good fun, being one of that good-natured throng, and our three visitors from the country were content simply to drift along with it, each armed with a feather tickler he had snatched from some unwary passer-by, intoxicated by the crowd, the lights and the merry uproar.

Suddenly Butt stopped and turned.

"There's Effie Colchester!" he exclaimed.

"Where?"

"He just passed us—he and another fellow. Come on, let's catch up with them," and Butt tried to point them out.

"Move forward, please! Plenty of room in

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the front of the car!" piped a fat man behind them.

"We're blocking traffic here," said Bill. "We'd better get out of the way."

"Let's turn around and catch up with them," and Butt started forcing his way back. But they were in the part of the crowd that was moving forward, and they had to shove their way into a stream in the other direction before they could make much progress. By that time Colchester and his companion were lost sight of, but the three kept on, trusting that luck would somehow bring them together again.

It did: before they had gone a block they came upon Colchester and Meredith standing in front of a big doorway, buying whirligig rattlers from a lame Italian.

"Tresham this way!" called Butt, grabbing Colchester by the arm. Colchester turned.

"Butt Chanler!" he exclaimed. "Where in thunder did you drop from?"

"From up in the rural districts. We're seeing the big city. Aren't you a long way from home?"

"We thought we'd give the metropolis a treat. Hello, you other people! What's that you've got there? Ticklers! That's plebeian. You've got to have some of these things if you want to travel in our circle. Here, Michael Angelo, we desire to purchase three more of these weapons!"

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The three cast away their ticklers and took the new noise-makers which the smiling Italian handed out to them with a "Happa New Year, Signori."

"Now whither bound?" asked Colchester, giving his rattler a deafening whirl.

"Nowhere in particular. We're just roaming around till ten o'clock. We're to meet Walter Welles then and have him show us the town."

"Then we'll roam together," and Colchester led the way, elbowing his passage into the crowd.

Meredith had not spoken a word to them. His greeting had been a bare nod.

"We're butting into something here," whispered Bill, putting his mouth close to Butt's ear.

"Of course we're not! Can't you see Effie's glad to see us? He'd tell us if he didn't want us along."

"That's all right, but Meredith is sore about it. I move we let 'em go along by themselves."

"Wait till we get uptown farther. We'll meet Welles there, and if they want to duck away they can. I want to see Effie a minute."

So they kept on till they came to the hotel where they were to meet Welles. There Butt got Colchester off into a corner for his "minute," while the other three stood waiting, Meredith a little apart and obviously fidgeting.

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While they stood there Welles came up, and Meredith introduced him to Bill and Burnet.

"Glad to know you," he said cordially. "I really know you already, because Butt keeps me pretty well posted about the people up in college. He's the only man I ever knew who writes regular letters that really tell things. Where is the little feller?"

"Over there in the corner talking secrets with Colchester. Here, Butt!"

Butt's attention was at length attracted and there followed a period of greetings and questionings and answerings during which Meredith and Colchester disappeared.

"I'm glad they're gone," remarked Bill. "That man Meredith is about as good company as a deaf and dumb man. I'd like to know what Effie travels around with him for."

"There's a reason!" said Butt meaningly, speaking aside so that Burnet would not hear. "I'll tell you later, but it's a dead, dead secret."

Sabrina! It came to Bill in a flash, but he only said:

"Well, Meredith needn't think I'm after any of his secrets. Do you suppose if we went out on the street again he'd think we were trying to follow him?"

"Let's go where we can sit down and talk for a

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while. We've tramped around enough for now, and we can go out again when it comes time to see the New Year in."

Welles knew a place where they could sit down and talk, and thither they repaired and there they stayed till nearly midnight. There was much to talk of, and Butt evidently imparted his dead, dead secret to Welles under cover of the music and uproar of the cafe where they sought refreshment, while Bill, suspecting the subject of the revelations that were going on, kept Burnet's attention in other directions.

The secret might have been unfolded under Burnet's very nose, though, without his suspecting it, for he was busy making mental notes of what was going on about him. Everything was grist to his mill, and even as he sat there he planned out a wonderful story that he could put it all into. He was trying his hand at real stories nowadays, not Sabrina themes, and here was new local color galore.

"Come on," said Welles finally. "The street's the place to see the New Year in—up on Times Square," and out he led them. The crowd was bigger and merrier than ever, and the jam about Times Square almost impassable. But they found a place on the edge of the sidewalk where they took their stand, arms about each other's shoulders to brace them against the pressure from behind, to

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watch the electric ball high above the Times Building. At midnight that ball would drop.

The crowd had stopped moving now. It stood still, dense and compact, every eye turned upward. It was silent, too, breathlessly waiting. There seemed something hypnotic about that ball of light, holding those thousands of eyes during that strange hush. Our four unconsciously stretched upward till they stood on tiptoes, their faces raised. Then somewhere the first stroke of a church bell tolled, and pandemonium broke loose as the ball dropped. And with it, as one man, dropped the four, as if something that had held them up suddenly let go, and they lay in a laughing heap on the sidewalk.

"Happy New Year! Happy New Year!" Everybody was greeting everybody, and they picked themselves up, helped by friendly strangers, to shake hands with whoever happened to be nearest.

"It's lucky no one we know saw us," laughed Bill. "They'd think we'd had too much New Year."

"Where do you want to go now?" asked Welles, as they stopped where a large doorway made an eddy in the stream of moving people.

"Let's not see any more sights to-night—unless you really want to," suggested Bill. "Is there anything more to see?"

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"Just more of the same kind of thing—and then some more," said Welles.

"Let's go back to the hotel, then. We can sit around there and talk. I'd rather, if you're game."

They were, for it had been a long day and the night promised to be even longer before it was done. To judge from the streets the town might just have been starting in. So they started back to Bill's hotel. On the way Bill discovered a new pastime for their amusement—which consisted simply in flipping a handkerchief at some passer-by. The flipped one invariably turned indignantly around, feeling in his pocket with one hand and snatching at the handkerchief with the other, under the momentary delusion that he was being pick-pocketed. This made diversion enough for them till they reached the cross street where Mr. Bill had made their headquarters. They found the rest of the Bill family had not yet come in, so they repaired to the smoking room for what Welles called a "gab-fest."

There was plenty to talk about. Welles had to hear all about the college, and Butt had to hear all about Welles and his doings out in the "wide, wide world." Burnet listened eagerly, convinced that the life of a New York reporter was the life for him—at least until he had written his famous book, then he would have no need for a job of any kind.

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But the freshman's head at length had all it could stand of new things, and he fell asleep in his chair, while the others, with lowered voices, talked of the "dead, dead secret."

Bill had already partly guessed what it was—the Sabrina banquet was to be held here in New York within a fortnight. That was why Meredith was in town, and one of the reasons Butt had found it convenient to accept Bill's holiday invitation. He had been coming to New York anyway, and to-morrow Burnet must be kept engaged while he hied himself off to aid in completing arrangements that were necessary.

"It's been more fun, Walter," whispered Butt, giggling happily. "A little while ago Bill suddenly got interested in Sabrina, and kept talking and asking about her, and I had a great time all to myself kidding him about the great secret that was brewing. That is, every one thought I was kidding, but this thing was being planned all the time."

Bill wished that Welles knew all that had really happened. He wanted very much to wink at some one over Butt's head. But Welles did not know, and the wink would not have been understood.

"What has Effie got to do with it?" he asked.

"Nothing, only he happens to be here with Merry just as you happen to be here with me. Of

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course he knows about it, but except the committee and you two, he and Merry are the only ones."

"Isn't there *any* one else?" asked Bill slyly.

"Oh, of course *the* one—the one that has charge of her now. But no one knows who that is but Merry."

"Not even the president of the sophomore class?"

"When they get ready to tell me they will," said Butt with dignity. "I haven't asked, I know that."

And then Bill did wink. But Welles only half understood what the joke was, though he smiled responsively.

There was a lot more planning about the various things the class would do in connection with the banquet in the way of having a good time, and much pledging of secrecy, and at length they aroused Burnet and bade Welles good night.

"You can get around to-morrow some time, can't you?" Butt asked, as Welles stood in the door to go. "We have to leave some time in the afternoon."

"I think so. I'll call you up, anyway. So long."

Bill helped Butt to make excuses the next morning and kept Burnet from being curious by a sly mention of a "friend" Butt had to see. Burnet was

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too busy gathering new impressions, however, to be curious about Butt, and Bill need not have perjured himself even by implication.

That night they were back in Tresham, and Butt confided to Bill most privately that all was arranged, but he mustn't breathe a word to anybody or even let on that he knew there was anything to breathe a word about.

College brought Nichols again, and Burnet sighed at the thought of seeing him once more. Things were so petty here in Tresham. If he were only out in the world, doing things among grown men as Welles was! He indulged in a little period of discontent, in which he decided that he was wasting his time here, and would quit college and go to work at the end of the year—a period which most fellows pass through some time before they get to be juniors; it seems to be part of the college course.

Nichols was apparently untroubled by any anxiety about how his affairs were coming out, and in the face of his serenity it seemed useless for anyone else to worry. But the days passed and no thunderbolt fell, until those who were waiting began almost to believe that nothing was to happen after all.

Besides, Butt had the banquet to think of, and he moved about in a state of excitement that amused Bill tremendously. But it was admirably concealed,

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and Bill wondered if he could have detected it if he had not happened to know what a deal of plotting and secret-keeping was going on in the head of the small sophomore president.

Bill, since he did happen to know, was kept continually informed of the progress of things, though the information was always imparted behind locked doors or far afield where any eavesdropper within half a mile could be quickly sighted. But one part of the secret even Bill could not know yet, though Butt was not able to refrain from telling him that there was such a part. He chuckled over it mightily, hinting that it was the best joke ever, and at length admitting that it had to do with the man who was Sabrina's guardian.

"You could guess and guess and guess, and you'd never hit it," he confided. "But there's no use in guessing, because I can't tell you even if you do get it right." So Bill did not try to guess. But he, too, chuckled.

He got additional fun out of watching Colchester, too. He did it quietly, however, and in a different spirit from that which had formerly possessed him. He was done with the old-time spying. He kept watch now just for amusement, and to see if Effie would notice it. Apparently Effie had quite forgotten that Bill had once been very near to treading on forbidden ground, and he gave no sign of

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suspecting that he was the object of a friendly "shadow."

As a matter of fact Bill saw nothing at all out of the ordinary. If Colchester were as full of what was impending as Butt, he concealed it perfectly, and Bill had to admit that as a plotter the easy-going senior was a complete success. He discovered nothing at all, until one day he found that Effie had left town, quietly and naturally, as was his wont in all things, and without exciting question. Bill chuckled again, and still again when Butt drew him into his bedroom to tell him there was not much longer to wait.

The great day was really near. All arrangements were complete, the taxes on each member of the class had been levied, the loyal followers of the goddess were prepared, and only the time for departure remained to be disclosed. That, and the place to which they were going, was still kept secret.

Butt was to leave a day in advance, and he confided to Bill that that day would probably be the morrow.

"If it weren't for Goat I'd go to-day. Perhaps I can sneak off after Goat to-night."

"Goat," so-called at Tresham, is the weekly fraternity meeting, and obviously Butt could not be absent from that without exciting inquiries from juniors and freshmen, so wait he must.

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That afternoon the faculty came to a decision in the Nichols case, though only the Honor System Committee was informed of it. What public announcement needed to be made would be made to-morrow. It was a singularly lenient decision, arrived at after much earnest deliberation, for the case had peculiar features. Nichols was merely to be flunked in Mathematics, which, to him, brought with it the penalty of dropping back into the freshman class. His standing as a sophomore was too precarious to bear the additional burden of an unequivocal, out-and-out condition.

Butt told Bill about this, too.

"They had Nichols around and gave him a talking to this afternoon," he said. "Do you know, Bill, that man has horseshoes all over him, and he doesn't know it. When I told him he was lucky to get off as easy as he did, he just grinned that grin of his. He thinks they couldn't have done anything more."

"I should think it was enough. I'd hate to tell my old man I'd been put back into the freshman class."

"Well, Nick is different. He'd have been there anyway by the end of the semester. He was only a sophomore by the skin of his teeth. The queer part of it is that he doesn't see any disgrace in it, and that's just what they wanted him to see. The pun-

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ishment doesn't amount to anything in his case—they made that part light because they have a notion he must have some good to him to have done it for Bunny the way he did; and then they tried to talk ideals to him. But ideals aren't in Herbie's line, I'm afraid."

"Well, Bunny'll have him for a classmate now. That's a blessing he'll appreciate."

"Bill!" Butt spoke very seriously. "I want to know what you think. Of course none of the banquet committee has known anything about this thing. We didn't know ourselves that Nick would be put out of our class, and they've got his money for the banquet."

"Why shouldn't they?"

"They should, of course. But he isn't in our class any more. Do you think he ought to go to the banquet?"

"I don't see why not. He's paid his money and he's a Sabrina man. Once a Sabrina man, always a Sabrina man, isn't it? It ought to be if it isn't."

Butt's anxious seriousness relaxed.

"That's what I thought, but people don't always agree with me about such things. Anyway, I've fixed it so he'll be able to go all right. He'll get word when the others do, and he can go if he wants to."

"I don't think anybody'll kick. When does the sentence go into effect?"

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"They're going to announce it in chapel tomorrow. They think the whole force of the punishment will be lost if people don't know about it. But I think Nick is more pleased than anything else. He's glad to be in Bunny's class!"

"Well, he's a queer one, that's all I can say for him. I'd rather be in my own shoes than Bunny's. I'm not especially strong for that kind of devotion."

That was the last Bill saw of Butt alone before he left town. He managed to steal away unchallenged after "Goat," and the sophomores, who were the only ones who noticed his absence, sighed, each to himself, with relief. They remembered a time, little more than a year ago, when their president had not escaped so successfully.

Chapel-goers had something new to talk about the next morning, when the fact of Nichols's cribbing, with certain details that were deemed necessary in explanation of its punishment, was made public for the first time. Burnet, who knew what was coming, cut chapel, but Nichols was there as usual, presenting a front that many called brazen and some called brave. It was probably more indifferent than anything else.

And the chapel-goers talked about it, with considerable difference of opinion. For the first time in his college career, Nichols might have heard good words said about himself if he had been around to

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hear. Something in what he had done won sympathy, as the down-trodden ruffian who strikes a blow for the one man who has done him a kindness sometimes wins our sympathy in story books. Most of the fellows agreed that he had been foolish, but to many of them that did not make any difference with the spirit in which he had acted, and they contended that he should not have been punished at all. The majority thought that the faculty had done wisely and justly by him, while some—those who had called him brazen—maintained heatedly that he had no more right to a light sentence than any other who might have been caught in cheating. He had cheated for himself before he had cheated for Burnet.

But Nichols heard none of this, nor would he have been greatly interested if he had. He was quite content with the way things had turned out. He had not enjoyed being a sophomore anyway, and perhaps now he could make a place for himself in the class with the one fellow who had been friendly to him without making him feel that being so was a favor. He was going to make an attempt at it, at any rate.

Early in the afternoon the sophomores were given something besides Nichols to think of. Word was passed around, with a secrecy for which Butt could have found nothing but praise, that all Sabrina

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men who could go were to leave in the early evening for New York. It was a word that they had been expecting for many days, but it was not any less exciting for that. Then they showed what a year in college had done for them, for though this was one of the most momentous occasions of its kind that was to come to them, they went about their business with a nonchalance that had been utterly impossible when their freshman banquet was coming off. They laid their plans coolly, right in the face of unsuspecting odd-classmen, and when the time came for them to leave, lo! they were gone.

As in all things which they did, the Kappa Chi sophomores prepared for this departure together, according to plans that seemed hardly worth all the earnest discussion they gave them. It was decided that this was no time for stealthy sneaking away, as if they had no right to go. That was well enough when they were freshmen—it even added a certain spice of adventure. But now, if ever, they ought to be able to depart openly, with only their wits and their careless bearing to carry them through without exciting question. All the more glory to them if they could come back and say: “Well, you saw us go: we made no secret of it. If you had been wise you could have nabbed us then and there.”

It was no unusual thing for the sophomore delegation to run over to Southboro for an evening, and

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that was what they were apparently going to do to-night. Bill met the others at the house after supper, ready to start. To add to their daring, they even paid visits to all the rooms, to crow secretly over their less fortunate odd-class brethren. As it happened, however, the house was empty save for some seniors, who had been to one Sabrina banquet and for financial reasons felt they could forego the joys of another.

"Give our regards to the lady," they said, "and see that Effie Colchester gets back safe. He's likely to get lost in that little New York town."

And so they left, without an enemy in sight.

"This looks too easy," said Bill as they boarded the Southboro car at the corner.

"I'm glad it is," said Hawkins, breathing an audible sigh of relief. He was not a good actor, and he was quite satisfied not to have had to play the part so bravely laid out for them. "This bold and daring game is all very well, but I'm glad we're safely off."

At Southboro they took the train for Springfield, and many other sophomores were aboard, with a small sprinkling of seniors. They felt well out of the woods now, and the festive spirit that was to culminate in the banquet began to awaken. The quartet from Kappa Chi had stopped at the station to dispatch a telegram to Butt saying all was well,

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and nothing remained between them and the shrine of their devotion but four hours' train ride.

Still more sophomores awaited them in Springfield, so that now the loyal followers of Sabrina numbered over a hundred strong. They made an imposing throng as they stood on the station platform chanting their

“All hail, Sabrina, dear!”

The spirit of it was growing on Bill.

“It's too bad Bunny isn't one of us,” he told Gray. “He's always lamenting how nobody ever raves over Sabrina any more. He just ought to be along now and see! Say— Let's send him a message of condolence—it'll make him all the sorrier he's nothing but a freshman, and we're far enough away now so it won't do any harm.”

So the four of them went to send another telegram. They made it so lengthy that the operator, who was new to his job and inclined to take a personal interest in the messages passing through his hands, stared at it with open curiosity.

“Excuse me,” he said, as he counted the number of words. “But you're college students, ain't you?”

Hawkins, who felt that this was undue familiarity and therefore to be resented, drew himself up to his full height and scowled.

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"What's that to you?" he demanded in his gruffest voice.

The operator retreated a step.

"Well, you needn't get mad. I thought this was probably a joke."

"What's that to you?" repeated Hawkins.

The operator's face was red now, and his voice dropped its friendly tone.

"Nothing at all if you're going to take it that way. I thought if it was a joke, I could put you wise to something so's it wouldn't turn out to be on you. But I'll let you run your own affairs."

"What do you mean?" asked Bill, shoving Hawkins out of the way and nudging him to keep still.

"Nothing at all, nothing at all," said the operator, resuming his counting of the words. "Excuse me for buttin' in."

Bill became straightway very pacific.

"Who said you were butting in? It is a joke, and if there's anything that can help it along I wish you'd tell us. We're sorry we got huffy about it."

Bill's manner, fully as much as his words, succeeded in mollifying the offended operator.

"Well, I thought it was sort of a shame to send a great long thing like this to a feller when he ain't there to get it."

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"What do you mean?" Bill asked again sharply, and Hawkins pressed forward again, fixing the operator with his scowl, until he squirmed uneasily.

"Nothin', only there was a feller by the name of Theodore E. Burnet sent a message here not more than twenty minutes ago. It may not be the same one, but the name was the same."

"What did he say?" demanded Hawkins.

"Oh, I can't tell that. But he isn't in Tresham, and he won't be to-night."

The four looked at one another.

"Come on," said Bill. "Thank you," he added to the operator, laying down a coin for him. "You needn't send the message."

"Well, what do you know about that?" remarked Durham, who had been a silent onlooker to what was going on.

"I don't know anything—but I'd like to know." Bill relapsed into thought.

Out on the platform the fellows were still singing, to the plain enjoyment of a small crowd that was also waiting for a train. The train was almost due now. Already the train announcer was heralding its approach, and as its light gleamed far up the track they all massed together to give the long Tresham yell, with a resounding "*Sabrina! Sabrina! Sabrina!*" on the end of it.

Suddenly there came an answering yell that

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turned the cheering into pandemonium, and, coming from everywhere, it seemed, there appeared countless swiftly moving figures who mingled, shouting, with the waiting crowd just as the train pulled in.

Bill felt his arm clutched from behind, and turned to look into the grinning face of Bobby Crane, Noughty-Odd.

“Stung!” remarked Crane blithely.

Bill tried to snatch away.

“What’s the use of scrapping?” asked the junior. “There are as many of us here as there are of you. They’re not going to hold the train here while we fight it out, and you people aren’t going to get aboard without a fight.”

Bill did not stop to dispute with him, for the fight was on. All up and down the platform it raged, while the trainmen swore and respectable citizens appealed to the law to open them a passage to the waiting cars. The law was represented by only three policemen who chanced to be opportunely near, but they were of brawny build and armed with stout billies, and they managed to clear a space around the car steps. At length the train pulled out, but the fight continued, until more policemen arrived and quelled it through sheer power of hard hitting.

The combatants were some time in becoming

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quiet, and the blue-coated guardians of the peace were still kept busy putting down individual fracas, with many threats of arrest if the fighting was not stopped. Bill, with collar torn off and hat gone, led a small band of dishevelled ones to the station wash-room, where he found Burnet nursing a bleeding nose.

"How's this for the good old times, Bunny?" he asked with an attempt to smile, that discovered to him a swollen upper lip.

Burnet was too occupied to answer, and besides, Crane, who had perched on the edge of the wash-basin, preëmpted everybody's attention with his crowing.

"The good old times are back again, and Sabrina is safe in the hands of her rightful owners once more," he announced gaily.

The sullen sophomores would not give him any satisfaction by asking questions, but Crane was not deterred by that. He went on to give details freely and generously.

"After long years the stolen goddess is restored. To-morrow there will be tearing and gnashing in New York town, for you who are expected will not arrive and then the great loss will be discovered."

"Will you vacate a few inches and give me a chance at this washbowl?" interrupted Hawkins,

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brushing Crane from his perch with an arm that was not wholly gentle.

"Don't be so peevish about it," retorted Crane mildly. "There's no use railing against fate, you know; and fate decreed long ago that your eyes would never rest on the fair Sabrina."

Bill turned and fled from this gloating junior. He had never found Crane tiresome before, but to-night he seemed absolutely banal.

Bill was no unhappier than the rest of his classmates. The first fighting spirit had died down, but the humiliation of defeat smouldered and gathered heat, and it was a sullen crowd that waited for the last train back to Southboro. For New York and the banquet was out of the question now; nothing was left but the dismal return to Tresham, there to meet afresh the taunts and jibes of the odd-classmen.

How it had happened was a mystery. The sophomores were still too sore in spirit to talk calmly with their rivals about the matter, and the others, taking their cue from Crane, insisted that it was just fate. Sabrina was weary of captivity, and had returned to the class of her choice without human agency.

All of which was nonsense, as Bill knew very well. But he was not able to figure out anything satisfactory in place of it. This sudden descent of

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odd-classmen upon them could not have been planned very long in advance. There had not been long to plan it in, and someone would surely have got wind of it. They had probably learned about the coming banquet when the final instructions were passed around that afternoon. Anyway, Sabrina must still be safe, for she was not to be brought forth till the next day, and the cleverest maneuvering that freshmen and juniors were capable of could not get on her track till then.

Crane's talk was probably all hot air, with only the fact that their departure had been discovered and prevented for a basis.

So Bill sent another telegram to Butt:

“Noughty-Odd has detained entire class in Springfield. Useless to try to come. They know where we are going. Be careful.”

Butt would have to make what he could out of that, and be on his guard. There might be some of the enemy in New York, but being forewarned, Butt and Meredith ought not to find it hard to dodge them.

It was not a gay crowd that made extra cars necessary to get back to Tresham from Southboro that night. Even the anti-Sabrinaites had worn themselves weary with gloating, though they man-

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aged to muster up some fitful yelling when they finally separated to go to bed. But the loyal worshipers of the "Widow" let them yell undisturbed. All their spirit was gone.

And Nichols—Freshman Nichols, now—was to blame.

CHAPTER X

THE GODDESS HERSELF

NICHOLS could no longer complain that he was not a figure of some prominence in the life of Tresham College—if he had ever felt moved to make such a complaint. On Wednesday morning a chapel announcement had brought him out of obscurity and made him talked about, but that was as nothing to the whirlwind raised by what became known on Thursday. He was the man who had betrayed the secret of the Sabrina banquet!

Various people had sympathized with him in the matter of his cribbing, and hardly anyone had condemned him as being anything worse than foolish. But now he was an outcast, ostracized, for he was the blackest kind of a traitor.

Poor Nichols! It was his trump card, which he had played for the highest stake he knew—to be looked on as a loyal and true member of the new class into which he had been thrust. It had not been deliberate; it had come to him as a sort of inspiration, which he had hugged to himself as a

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sign from Heaven, pointing the way to trust and honor. Everything seemed to help him. Chanler had taken particular pains to inform him of where the banquet was to be, and the committee had sought him out and told him when they were to leave just as if he had still been a regular sophomore. But he wasn't still a sophomore, which let him out according to his way of thinking, and he was glad he wasn't. Anyone else with the information he had would be justified in revealing it—so was he!

Some instinct warned him, however, that Burnet was not the man to tell. Instead, he went to Rowson, and the deed was done. No one stopped to examine the source of the information. For the present the joyous excitement of having it was enough, especially as it was very easily verified by watching the sly maneuvers of the sophomores. The juniors immediately assumed the leadership; a half dozen of them straightway left for New York, on the chance of taking the guardians by surprise with the statue in their possession, and the rest, reinforced by many freshmen, slipped quietly away to Springfield to surprise the banqueters in the first flush of their jubilation.

It worked, and the plans of the sophomores were effectually spoiled. It was good fun into the bargain, and Burnet rejoiced in the return of the old-time spirit. In his enthusiasm he had sent a long telegram

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to an odd-class alumnus he knew in New York, who was still young enough to enjoy going out on the trail of Sabrina, telling him where the banquet was to be held and bidding him get on the job.

But the next morning, when the excitement had somewhat abated, people began to ask how the thing had been discovered. The particulars became known in short order, and straightway Nichols became tremendously unpopular. "Once a Sabrina man, always a Sabrina man" turned out to be a pretty general sentiment in the odd as well as the even classes, and there was hardly a fellow that did not condemn Nichols's action. It wasn't playing fair, it was bidding for popularity at the cost of honor and decency and everything else, and even Burnet turned against him.

"How could you do it?" he demanded disgustingly. "Butt trusted you. He went out of his way to fix things so you could go, because he was sorry for you. It was your last chance: your last chance was even gone, but he gave it back to you when you had been kicked out of his class!"

"What did I care about their old banquet and their old statue? He didn't need to tell me about it. I never asked him to," protested Nichols, bewildered and hurt by the storm that had burst about him. "If you'd got wind of it you'd have told. Any of you would."

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"Not if I'd been in your place. We want to get that statue, but we'd be sports about it. We wouldn't have betrayed any trust like that."

"I'm a freshman, and I did it for my class."

"There's no use talking about it," said Burnet shortly, and he would talk no more.

Altogether, Nichols was "in" decidedly wrong. He was misunderstood on every hand, and turn where he might he could find no sympathy that was worth the having. All the friendly feeling and goodwill he had got with so much difficulty was dashed away in one swoop, and, most heart-breaking of all, Burnet would have no more to do with him. Beside that, even the things that Chanler said to him did not matter, and Butt came to him in a white heat of rage and gave him such a tongue-lashing as he had never heard before. Butt did not often get angry, but this betrayal of confidence stirred him to the depths and tipped his tongue with a stinging eloquence that ought to have left Nichols scorched and done for.

Butt was pretty well broken up over the turn things had taken. Not only had the banquet been a fizzle, which was shame enough in itself, but he came in for a small share of criticism for trusting such a man as Nichols, knowing all the particulars as he had. That did not last long, for most of the fellows soon came to understand the spirit in which he had

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done it, but the fact remained that he had made a mistake, and that was a hurt to his self-esteem he could not quickly forget.

After all, aside from the fact that the banquet had to be postponed and all the plans made again, the harm done was not serious. The juniors who had hastened so confidently to New York, as well as the alumnus to whom Burnet had sent his urgent telegram, had failed absolutely to find any trace of Sabrina's whereabouts. She was as safe as ever, apparently, and the odd-classmen were no nearer to getting her than they had been before.

But interest in the bronze goddess had been effectually stimulated. She was more talked about than she had been for years, and Burnet had hopes that the old spirit had returned really to stay. The Sabrina war chant was sung and hooted at with a vim that was very far from perfunctory, and that rumpus on the platform of the Springfield station had provided a taste of battle that sharpened the appetite for more. The odd-classmen had successfully frustrated an attempt at a banquet—something that had not been done for so long that no one remembered its like—and that made them feel that perhaps it wasn't such a hopeless struggle after all. If only they were given half a chance the real, ancient rivalry might be worth reviving again.

The Sabrina men had to endure many taunts

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about the banquet they didn't have, but that was not the end of the taunting. Challenges began to be issued to bring the goddess into reachable territory—to hold the banquet somewhere where distance was not the only thing to protect them, where to pull it off successfully would mean a real triumph of cleverness.

Bill allied himself with this campaign, for he agreed thoroughly with Burnet that there was no credit in keeping the statue locked up in a safe-deposit vault and having the banquet in a place so far away that pursuit was out of the question. He argued the matter with Butt and other sophomores, but while some of them admitted that he was quite right, theoretically, they were all inclined to agree that safety was more to be desired than any amount of "old-time spirit."

"Just imagine that you had charge of her," said Butt. "You'd give up those ideas in a minute. It's all right to talk, but if you were responsible for her you'd see that she was in the very safest place you could find. If a safe-deposit vault seemed the best place, you'd put her there."

"No, sir!" protested Bill. "Why, that takes every particle of sport away from it! It's just like playing with loaded dice—you can't lose, and what's the fun when the other fellow hasn't even a smell of a chance?"

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"I don't know. I never played with dice."

Bill snorted.

"That's no argument. You know what I mean."

"Of course I do. But I know what I mean, too. Think if she got away from you! You'd never hear the last of it, and it wouldn't be any joke either. Every Sabrina man in the country would be jumping on you. You'd never live it down."

"Shucks! Do you suppose any Sabrina man thinks seriously about it one way or the other after he gets out of college? He might think the man that lost her wasn't on to his job, but what would he care?"

"You don't know what Sabrina spirit is," replied Butt shortly.

"Now look here, Butt! That sort of talk is all right sometimes, but just tell me honestly and seriously, do you think Sabrina amounts to anything really? This hot air about spirit and that sort of thing sounds well, but does it really mean anything? The whole business is a good custom. If I were a kid and heard about it I think I'd come to Tresham just because they have it here. But I'm a Sabrina man just as much as you are, and if there's anything in it besides an excuse for a friendly scrap and a good banquet, I haven't found it out yet."

"I told you you didn't know what Sabrina spirit

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was," Butt repeated. Bill threw back his head impatiently.

"There isn't any—that's the trouble," he cried. "And there would be if you weren't so blamed scared about nothing. I tell you if I had charge of her I'd hide her right here in this town, and after I'd handed her over to the next man I'd tell about it, and show 'em what a lot of dummies they'd been not to get on to it."

Butt smiled, a very superior smile.

"That would sound mighty well, if you could do it. But I know you wouldn't dare, when it came right down to it. The way they do now is the only safe way."

Bill tightened up his eyes into a quizzical look.

"Do you know where Sabrina has been hidden this year?" he asked.

"No."

"What if I told you that I did know?"

"I wouldn't believe you."

"Well, I won't tell you that. But I'll tell you something else. I know *who* had her hidden."

Butt smiled again, unbelievably.

"Who?"

"Effie Colchester."

Butt stared.

"Who told you?" he demanded.

It was Bill's turn to smile now.

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"No one."

"How do you know, then?"

"I just happened to find out."

"Does anybody else know?"

"I haven't told anybody, if that's what you mean. I suppose Meredith knows. I don't know of anybody else."

"But how did you find out?"

"Oh, I have ways," answered Bill mysteriously. Butt looked thoroughly uncomfortable.

"You shouldn't have done that, Bill!" he exclaimed earnestly. "It isn't a joke, and it isn't any of your business."

"Oh, I know that, but I couldn't help it. I'm not to blame for having ears and eyes."

"What did I tell you?" demanded Butt. "That proves your theory about having her right around here is no good. If she were here in Tresham you'd have found out even where she was. Perhaps you do know?" he added, suspiciously.

"No, I don't know."

"But someone else might, if they'd found out as much as you have. Don't you see it's no game?"

"I don't think anyone else would be likely to find out what I did. I just happened upon it, anyway, and I had chances that a fellow who wasn't a Sabrina man wouldn't have had."

"Won't you tell me about it?"

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"There isn't anything to tell especially. I saw Effie with Meredith two or three times, in sort of secret conference, and you know Effie and Meredith aren't very great chums. I just put two and two together and guessed the answer, and then, when I came across another two, I added that on. Meredith and Effie were in New York together Christmas, and you yourself told me there was something doing then, and then Effie left here for the banquet early. It made a pretty good chain of evidence, taking everything."

Bill was not yet ready to tell the tale of the empty box in Colchester's barn. That was an incident which other people might see as a good joke, but the experience was too recent to be a laughing matter with him.

"Well," was Butt's final comment, "it all goes to show that I'm right and you're wrong," so both remained unconvinced.

Bill was so unconvinced, in fact, that he joined forces with Burnet in ridiculing the attitude of the sophomores. The result of their combined efforts appeared one morning tacked to one of the pillars in front of the chapel—a huge poster whose drawing was very crude but whose meaning was perfectly plain. It represented an hilarious feast, with a pitiful caricature of Sabrina adorning the center of the table, held in a sort of fortress, protected on all

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sides by huge cannon. Militia patrolled the street outside and at each door stood a phalanx of gigantic policemen. Beneath it was printed in sprawling capitals: "None but the brave deserve the fair."

This masterpiece did not stay on view for long. After a five-minute tussle some sophomores succeeded in tearing it down. But it served as the beginning of other things of the same kind, and for a time the Noughty-Even men made a regular tour of inspection every morning to destroy scurrilous posters that had been put up overnight. Bill had no share in them after the first one, but he had started the ball rolling, and the freshmen and juniors kept it up with increasing ingenuity. People began almost to believe that the Sabrina men were a timid lot after all.

Winter wore on to spring, with intermittent periods of Sabrina enthusiasm when the odd-classmen succeeded in perpetrating some jibe that was particularly stinging and their rivals attempted to retaliate. But the banquet had not yet come off, nor were there any immediate prospects of it. The juniors and freshmen began to hint very loudly that it was not to be this year—the sophomores had been scared into giving up the idea entirely.

One day Bill came into the Kappa Chi house bearing the latest achievement of the juniors in his hands. It was only a small card, printed in pen-and-

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ink, which he had happened to see on the bulletin board in the post-office before it had attracted general attention, bearing the announcement that all Sabrina men were to be in Boston on the afternoon of the following day, where they would be met by the United States battleship *Connecticut*, which would take them to Key West for their banquet.

It was one of the first pleasant spring days, and he found no one in the house but Colchester, who was at the piano giving vent to a pensive mood in soft and dreamy melodies. To him Bill showed the card.

Colchester was not pleased at this interruption of his music, and he looked at the card disdainfully.

"That's about the poorest yet," he observed, handing it back. "I should think they'd get tired of that sort of thing by this time. They said all they could say long ago," and he turned back to the piano.

Bill tossed the card into the fireplace.

"It is pretty poor," he assented. "But say, Effie, why don't you get back at them? They say we don't even dare to have the banquet now."

"Don't ask me. Butt Chanler has that to look out for."

"I don't mean the banquet especially. Why don't you pull off some stunt that would show 'em we're not afraid?"

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"*Why* do you ask *me* to pull off stunts? That sort of thing is up to your class."

"But we haven't got the statue yet."

Colchester answered merely with an inquiring look.

"And you have," went on Bill.

"Go to Meredith, then."

Bill sat down on the window-seat facing the piano and leaned forward earnestly.

"You know Meredith wouldn't be game for anything that was a bit different from the same old thing that's always been done. Butt wouldn't, either, if there was any risk in it."

Colchester laid his hands on the keys and struck into another tune.

"I don't know what you're going to do about it, then."

"*Please* cut out that drumming and stop trying to bluff me. It's you that can do something."

"What can I do?" Colchester was serenely continuing to play.

"Anything you want to. You know where the statue is."

If Bill was expecting Colchester to show surprise, he was disappointed. Effie continued his tune to the end, struck a leisurely final chord, and then turned around on the piano stool.

"How long have you known that?" he asked.

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"Since Thanksgiving time."

Colchester said nothing for a moment. He was thinking.

"There wouldn't be any object in denying it to you, so I won't do it. I suppose you found it out some time on that trip of the Musical Clubs. But I would like to know how much else you know."

Bill flushed uncomfortably.

"I don't really know anything else. I think you had her hidden in your barn—for a while anyway. I—I made a visit to your barn the night of the concert there. That was why I got home before the rest of you did."

Colchester's big face wrinkled into a smile.

"You didn't find anything, did you?"

"An empty box," said Bill, his flush deepening. Colchester dropped his smile and spoke seriously.

"I suppose you did it just to see if you could really find it, as a sort of detective stunt. I remember I thought of something like that at the time. Mildred got you pretty fussed by talking about it, and I thought then that perhaps there was some such bug floating around in your head, but I didn't suppose it amounted to so much. Didn't I say something to you about it?"

"You told me to remember that Sabrina men always stood together. I felt pretty bad about that. I thought you didn't think I could be trusted."

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“ Oh, no! I just meant that as a little hint to—to mind your own business, to put it baldly. You know the best way to stand by me, if you did think I was the senior guardian, was not to think any more about it.”

“ Well, I did try not to, but so many things happened that simply made me think! Your being with Meredith so much just about that time, and the note he sent you that you went around the corner to read and then tore up, and your being out in the barn with a hammer and sending that telegram after the concert——”

He broke off, stopped by the piercing look from under Colchester's lowered brows.

“ You are an observing person, Bill,” he remarked slowly.

Bill flushed again and a hot, stinging feeling came to his eyes.

“ I wasn't spying on you! ” he cried. “ I was going to, but I remembered what a rotten thing it was to do, and I didn't! I know it looks funny, my knowing all those things, but it was just accident. I was out on the street having a smoke before the dance, when I saw you go into the telegraph office, and I saw Tod Smith give you that note from Meredith on the car. I did watch to see when you read it, though. But right after that I made up my mind to forget the whole business, and then I lost

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my head and forgot everything *but* that, I got so excited over the idea of finding that statue. But I was so ashamed of it all afterwards that I never told a soul about it."

Colchester was smiling again.

"I'm sorry I spoke that way. I didn't mean that I thought you were doing anything to be ashamed of. And after all, there's no harm done. You didn't find her: you couldn't have, even if you'd been lots luckier than you were. Some time I'll tell you why. But I'll tell you now that all this talk about safe-deposit vaults is rot. Sabrina's in just the kind of a place they're howling that she ought to be in. They'd have a fit if they knew where. But they stand about as much show of finding her as they would if she were up at the North Pole."

Bill received this with a momentary silence, not unmixed with chagrin, for he had been one of these "howlers," and he had been as greatly fooled as any of them. But he was not long in returning to the point of his original attack.

"You agree with me, then, don't you, about keeping things alive and not letting them become nothing but a dried-up old tradition?"

"Sure; I'll prove it to you when I can tell you some things I can't tell you now."

"Then, Effie, listen here! Why won't you do something? Bring Sabrina into town or something

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like that, and flaunt her in their faces! It could be done, and it would be the greatest thing that's been pulled off here for years!"

"Now don't talk nonsense, Bill! I don't own her, and I can't do anything I want to with her. Meredith would jump off the chapel tower before he'd consent to any such stunt as that."

Bill sniffed contemptuously.

"Meredith's an old woman!"

"No, he isn't: he's a mighty good leader and manager. He wouldn't be the president of our class if he weren't. I haven't much more use for him personally than you have, but I know that he's an able fellow and has good sense. I wouldn't do anything he was against."

"If he's got good sense he won't be against it. You just—"

"Oh, you Effie Colchester!" came a shout from the front lawn. "O—oh, you *Ef*-fie!"

"It's Tod Smith," said Bill, glancing out the window. Colchester put his head out to see what was wanted.

"Come on out and hear the grass grow," called Smith. "What do you want to stay in the house for a day like this?"

"I'll be out in a minute," Effie called back. "I think your idea is a crazy one," he added to Bill, drawing his head in again. "But that makes me sort

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of like it. I don't think anything of the kind will go through, but I'll talk to Merry about it."

And he did. As he expected, Meredith flouted it. It was unheard of, and it was unsafe, and if it failed, as it was sure to do, they never could square themselves with the class again. But Colchester, having once broached the idea, grew stronger for it, and stronger still in the face of opposition. Butt Chanler was called in as a representative of the next even-year class, and the arguments were all gone over again. Butt was inclined toward the conservative views of Meredith.

"That sounds like one of Ridge Bill's schemes," was his first comment.

"It's a silly scheme," said Meredith.

"There couldn't be anything sillier than the way we've sat around and let those juniors and freshmen poke fun at us for the last two months," Colchester rejoined. "It's all right for us to keep a dignified silence when they call us 'fraid-cats, and say they're foolish children who know not whereof they speak, but the fact remains that they really are getting to believe what they say, and that's no game at all. We don't want to go out of this college with a reputation like that, whether we deserve it or not, and here's a chance to prove they're mistaken and at the same time show 'em they're not nearly so smart as they think they are."

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That was the gist of his argument, which he amplified and reinforced with an ardor that finally silenced them both. The sight of Effie Colchester forsaking his slow and easy-going ways to be really enthusiastic and insistent about anything was unusual enough in itself to have some effect. And he kept at it till he won them over.

"It's simply up to you," said Meredith, still reluctant in spite of his consent. "Perhaps you can do it, but don't blame anybody else if you make a big fizzle of it."

"Let's forget that and get down to business," rejoined Colchester, intent on completing plans and carrying them out right away. And the next hour was spent in a discussion of "hows" and "whens," that finally made even Meredith wake up and take interest, and left Butt thoroughly enthusiastic.

The general outline of procedure was decided upon, but a lot of the details depended on other things that needed investigation. Another conference was held in the evening in Bill's room, where they were less likely to be interrupted. Bill had been the real instigator of the affair, and Colchester insisted that he should have a share in the planning.

When the meeting finally broke up everything was arranged. It was only necessary to let one other senior into the plot and get him to help.

"But that's as good as sure already," Colchester

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assured them. "Phil Sands will be game for anything, and he'd mortgage everything he's got to help pull off a stunt like this."

As it turned out, Sands was "game." The principal reason that made him indispensable was that he owned an automobile, which he placed freely at their service, but in addition to that he had suggestions to offer that proved he was an excellent addition to the committee, and he had a summer home that was just the place to retreat to afterwards.

Many more had to be taken into confidence later, and they decided that on the day the great event itself was to come off every Sabrina man in college was to be notified, so they could be on hand in case of trouble. Colchester, Meredith and Butt were to be the chief actors, with Sands to run the machine for them, and Bill was to be a sort of home guard with about twenty other seniors and sophomores to help him.

They had to wait nearly two weeks for a time that seemed to them wholly suitable. The early coming of spring helped them, but it was necessary to have the roads fairly well dried up before they were willing to put their plan into execution. The last snow had gone nearly a month ago, but the frost in the ground still kept the fields and roadways muddy.

At last came a day when it was announced in

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chapel that the first outdoor practice of the baseball team would take place that afternoon. Up to then they had practiced only in the cage. Colchester looked at the sky, consulted the weather forecasts, and said that the time had come. Everything combined to make this just the day they had been waiting for, and shortly after chapel Sands's car, with Colchester, Meredith and Chanler in it, left town by the north road, away from the college.

Then the "home guard" did what had fallen to their share. Those who already knew the plans made all in readiness, while the news was spread among the other even-classmen that Sabrina was coming to town that afternoon. She would be visible for a very brief time on the baseball field, and they were to be on hand to welcome and defend her. Also they were to urge, in a casual way, as many odd-classmen as possible to be present without telling them any particular reason for it. By simply getting up a little enthusiasm for the first baseball practice of the season, making it seem a matter of giving the team a good send-off, they could gather crowd enough to insure a good-sized audience.

Hawkins and McCarthy were among the sophomores that constituted the "home guard." They went down to Bill's room after the midday meal, where they tried to sit down and wait patiently for the hours to pass. McCarthy, being a pitcher

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on the team, would be on the field with the other players when the big event occurred, and his part was to command the protective squad on the diamond and see that a clear track was open for the automobile when it approached. Hawkins was to be one of the guards at the gate, a position of importance but rather too far from the real center of action to suit him entirely.

"You fellows are going to have all the fun," he grumbled. "I'll be lucky if I can even see the doings from a distance. I don't see why they couldn't have put me with you: that's where the scrap will be if there is one, and I can scrap better than I can do anything else."

"You'll get all the scrapping you want guarding that gate after the machine has passed out," said Bill. "You've got to hold the fort and let them get away without anybody's following."

"What'll you be doing all this time?"

"Scouting. I'm going to get Bobby Crane's motorcycle and float around on that. It'll keep it away from him, and give me an advantage over the people on foot if anything should happen so I'd want to get away fast."

"I wish three o'clock would hurry up and get here," said McCarthy, pulling out his watch for about the 'steenth time.

Three o'clock was a long time coming. Even

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then there would be an hour to wait, but at three Butt was going to telephone if all was well with the approaching goddess. They went over to the house to await his message, which arrived in due course, and then repaired to the field.

So great a crowd, merely for baseball practice, might well have caused remark, for the Sabrina men, by each waylaying an odd-classman and carelessly suggesting that they see how the team was showing up, had succeeded in having over three-quarters of the college present. But remarks, even if they were made, did not develop into suspicion that anything unusual was to take place, and the crowd settled themselves in the bleachers or around the edge of the diamond just as if they had come to watch a game.

McCarthy and the others of the squad who knew what was coming hurried up the practice so that it began shortly after half-past three, and the senior cheer-leader started some singing and yelling so that the fellows would be kept with something to do during the intervening half hour.

"It's a good time for us to practice, too," he told them. "Now, a long yell for the team! Hip, hip——"

No one not in the secret noticed that at the main gate lingered a little squad of seniors and sophomores. At the other entrance, away across the field on the Southboro road and partly out of sight of the

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bleachers, was another. Through this the automobile was to make its entrance.

Bill had borrowed Crane's motorcycle, as he had often done before, and was serenely chugging around the cinder track, feeling like a member of the mounted police. His eyes, when they were not watching the Southboro gate, kept looking up to the chapel clock, plainly visible over the leafless trees. There was only five minutes to wait now.

Suddenly he caught sight of an automobile approaching the main gate and sent his machine flying over to meet it. What had happened to cause this change of plan? The men on the bleachers had not seen it yet, for the grand stand stood in their way. Then, as the guard threw open the gate, he saw that it was someone else—a junior named Morrison, waving his hand gayly as he steered by the little crowd, who stared at one another in consternation.

“Bill!” cried Hawkins, running up excitedly. “You’ve got to meet them and warn them that Morry has his machine here. He can follow them!”

“That’s up to you!” said Bill as he turned around. “You mustn’t let him through the gate!”

The men on the bleachers, in the midst of their singing, suddenly heard a “Honk! Honk!” behind them and turned, startled. Morrison had passed behind the grand stand unseen and drawn up in the

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track directly back of them. For an instant they thought it was Meredith and one or two let out a shout of welcome before they discovered their mistake.

“Greetings!” cried Morrison, honking his horn by way of salutation. “What goes on?”

“The grand opening of the season,” cried a senior in answer. “Come up here, you bloated aristocrat, and mingle with the common people a while. We’re having some singing and we need your voice.”

As Morrison had no voice, that was a palpable falsehood, but at the urgent shouts which backed up the senior’s invitation he descended from his car and mounted into the bleachers.

“Just for a few minutes,” he said, squeezing himself into the place they made for him. “That new steed of mine is impatient, and he wants to take another spin. Isn’t it a dandy? Dad’s man brought it up as far as Southboro this morning——”

But no one was listening to him now. Over across the diamond another car had appeared, entering by the Southboro gate, and half the men in the bleachers were watching it breathlessly. Slowly it breasted the little rise of ground just beyond the edge of right field and turned into the cinder track. The men were silent. Most of those who were not looking for it had not yet seen the approaching car,

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which left the track, and slightly heightening its speed began to cross the diamond.

"Here, fellows!" called the baseball captain, who had gone over to the coaches' bench, and, led by McCarthy, the players followed him, wondering.

The car came nearer, but still the men were silent. The cheer-leader stood with one arm raised as if to give a signal, his face turned to watch the approaching car. It slowed down as it came near the center of the field, and, opposite the bleachers, almost stopped. Everyone was watching it now.

Sands was driving, with Colchester beside him. In the tonneau were Meredith and Butt, with something else. Suddenly they stooped over to lift it, and the cheer-leader, still watching them, threw up his other arm with the shout: "Come on—now!"

Every Sabrina man in the bleachers was standing with bared head, and at the leader's shout they broke into their song:

"All hail, Sabrina dear!"

But an instant later they themselves drowned their own singing in a mighty shout as the covering slipped from the thing which the men in the machine were holding up, and the goddess was revealed. For a full minute the car stopped and Sabrina was held in plain view, gleaming dully in the sunlight, then she

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was lowered again and with a sudden spurt the car sped toward the gate.

For that minute the odd-classmen had been stricken motionless by surprise. Then as they realized what had happened they leaped from the bleachers with a wild yell. The others tried to hold them, and the ground was strewn with tumbling forms. Morrison found himself held on both sides, but with three sweeping blows—and Morrison was a football man—he was free and had jumped over the top seat.

But already Sands was safe outside, far up the road, and Bill speeding along beside him, and the gate was closed again, with Hawkins and his men on guard.

CHAPTER XI

FLIGHT AND PURSUIT

THE goddess had come and gone, and only one odd-classman had got anywhere near the chariot in which she was whirled away. That man was Bobby Crane.

He had been getting a drink of water at the faucet beside the grand stand when he heard the first note of the Sabrina war chant, and, hurrying out to learn the meaning of the shout that followed, he had stood directly in the path of Sands's car as it sped toward the gate. He was not just sure what was happening, but he realized plainly that it had to do with Sabrina and that these men in the automobile were fleeing. He recklessly tried to jump aboard as it swerved by, but they were ready and Meredith gave him a shove that sent him tumbling to the ground. He was up again instantly, but the car was already at the open gate, with Bill close behind it on his motorcycle.

"Bill! Bill!" he yelled. "Give me that machine!"

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But Bill kept on without even turning his head, and already they were closing the gate behind him.

Then came a fight at the gate that is only waiting for some Tresham bard to put it into verse to go down into the college annals as another "Horatius at the Bridge." Before and since, Husky Hawkins won much glory for himself and the college by his prowess on the football field, but never did he do anything to equal the carnage he wrought that day protecting Sabrina's retreat. With Durham and a half dozen others to help him he kept the gate from being opened, while the rest, held at bay, friend and enemy alike, fought among themselves just inside. For a quarter of an hour it lasted, then some seniors called a halt. Those who had been vainly trying to climb over the fence were allowed to do so, and the gate was opened for those who preferred that way of exit. The very first was Morrison, raising his speed in defiance of every automobile law ever made, and in less than a minute he had disappeared up the road.

It was a long and weary line that straggled up from the field when all the scrimmage was over. Many had run ahead to learn if Sands had passed through the town, and which way he had gone, but most of them realized that there was nothing more they could do. If he was safely away, they could

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neither help nor hinder him, and the only chance of pursuit lay in Morrison and his machine.

The thing had been successfully accomplished, and the scoffers were silenced. Those who had been guilty of the numerous posters that had been appearing through the winter had achieved their object: they had goaded the Sabrina men into doing something daring even beyond all hopes. But they had gained nothing by it. It had resulted only in a triumphant stroke for their rivals that answered their taunting jibes once and for all.

Burnet had been in the thickest of the battle, among the leaders who had charged the gate in a vain attempt to open a way for Morrison. After it was over he repaired to the house to get cleaned up, and there he learned news of the fugitives.

Donnel, who, because he was a junior, had not known of any special reason for attending baseball practice that afternoon, had just been coming out of the house on his way to the library when Sands's machine dashed by. He paid no particular attention to it, except to notice that it was going pretty fast, and proceeded on his way. At the corner of the Southboro road he heard the distant rumblings of the fray that was then at its height down on the field, and as he stopped to listen, wishing that someone would happen along to tell him the meaning of it, Morrison came speeding up the hill, threw on the brake

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and came to an abrupt stop in the middle of the road.

"Have you seen Phil Sands?" he demanded breathlessly.

"Yes; he just went down by our house, full speed."

"How long ago?"

"About a quarter of an hour—maybe a little longer. What's the matter?"

But Morrison did not stop to answer. He was off again in an instant in hot pursuit.

Donnel went on to the library, got his book, and returned to the house. By that time Burnet had come up from the field, with a very wild tale to tell of much fighting and Sabrina. Donnel listened to it skeptically.

"They didn't have Sabrina!" he exclaimed. "They wouldn't have the nerve to bring her right into town like that. It must have been a fake statue. Did you see it yourself?"

"Of course I did! It was the real thing, I tell you!"

"How do you know? You never saw her before."

Burnet disdained to argue against any such statement as that, and went up to the bathroom to remove the stains of battle. But Donnel followed, eager to hear more in spite of his skepticism, and Burnet went

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over all the details while he splashed about under the shower.

"It makes me sick," he ended. "We may never get another chance at her for years, and there they walked away from us as if we were a lot of helpless infants."

"Perhaps they won't get away after all," said Donnel. "Morrison's on their trail, and if he once catches up with them there'll be a mix-up worth seeing. I'm sorry for Sabrina if he does. Morry can manage any two men that Phil Sands has with him."

Burnet stood stock-still under the running water.

"How do you know?" he demanded.

"I saw him. I saw Sands go by the house, and then Morry came along and I told him which way they had gone."

"Did he follow them?"

"Of course."

"Who was with him?"

"Bobby Crane and Al Thornton and Ned Wilkins."

Burnet turned off the water, smiling broadly.

"I guess there *will* be some mix-up if they get together. Do you think Morry's machine is as fast as Phil's?"

Donnel did not know, but they both felt that this latest Sabrina episode was not yet closed, and might

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still end in glory for the sons of Noughty-Odd. Others thought so, too, when they learned that Morrison was in pursuit, and all the evening the students of Tresham College waited eagerly for some news of the chase.

The chase, meanwhile, was even more interesting than those waiting imagined. As Sands's car climbed the little hill from the athletic field the three who had been holding up the statue breathed long sighs of relief. Sands himself was too intent on driving the car to indulge in any sighs yet. The tension of that ride across the diamond had been greater than any of them realized till it was over. Their foreheads were damp and their nerves fluttered now the crisis was past and they could relax and lie back in their seats. None of them spoke, except that Butt mechanically arranged the blanket so it covered the statue more securely; none of them even moved. They simply sat inert, drawing deep breaths.

Up into the town they sped, down the street past the Kappa Chi House, on under the railroad bridge and into the open country. Bill followed close behind them—just why he could not have told except that he had an uncertain idea that he must be on hand if they needed help.

As they began to climb into the hills that lie to the east of Tresham, he pushed ahead and came alongside the car.

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"There's no need of your coming with us," said Meredith, apparently noticing him for the first time.

"Do you want me to go back?" asked Bill.

"You might as well," answered Colchester. "There wouldn't be anything you could do. That thing you're riding on might run down, too, and you wouldn't want to get stranded out here in the woods."

"Bobby said it would run fifty miles anyway. He had some stuff put in only the other day, and he hasn't used it any since."

Bill hated to be put off like that. Here was adventure of just the kind he thirsted for, and he must leave it to others. But he wouldn't stay where they didn't want him, and he prepared to turn around.

"Is there anything you want me to do when I get back?" he asked.

"No, only to tell them we've gone some other way. I don't suppose they know which road we took, but Morrison would follow us to San Francisco if he thought we'd gone there."

"All right. Good luck!" And Bill turned back.

He rode along rather slowly, for his former zest had gone out of the enterprise. Still he kept a look-out ahead. If Morrison had by any chance taken this road it would not be hard for him to follow them. The track of Sands's machine showed plainly

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in the road, which was still soft and muddy in places. Automobiles did not pass this way so often that there would be any doubt about who had made them.

He had gone perhaps a mile when he saw another car some distance down the road coming toward him. He did not need to wait to see who it was. It could be no one but Morrison. He turned back again, at his highest speed, to warn them. In twenty minutes he had overtaken them again, for Sands, feeling secure now, was going more easily and talking with the other three over the way things had turned out. He slowed up still more at Bill's shout.

"Morrison's coming," he called. "He'll catch up with you in five minutes at this rate."

They did not wait for anything else. The car shot forward at full speed. Bill made no attempt to follow them. Instead, he dismounted and wheeled the motorcycle into the woods that lined one side of the road. There were no leaves yet to screen him, but the trees were fairly thick and Morrison's party would all be looking ahead. There was little danger that they would see him. He meant to wait till they had passed and then follow on behind. No turning back for him now.

The fellows in the front car were thinking hard as they flew along. They had not counted on being

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followed: they had not known until Bill told them at the Southboro gate that Morrison had a car, or they would not have taken the direct way they were going. Now the problem was not so much to outdistance him as to elude him. Somehow they must throw him off the track, for he must not know where they went. They had the statue to hide, and it was dangerous for even the part of the country they were in to be known.

“There’s a town a couple of miles ahead,” said Sands.

They consulted hastily and decided to go around it. If they passed directly through they would be seen, and Morrison would have no trouble at all in tracing them.

Sands knew the direct way to where they were going, but not the byroads. They had been going almost straight east. Now they turned to the north, with no idea where it would bring them, but hoping thus to lose their pursuers. It turned out to be a questionable move, for they found themselves in a road that was narrow and full of deep ruts where heavy wagons had passed through the mud, which was beginning to harden with the coming cold of night.

“We’ll never get anywhere on a road like this,” said Sands, trying to steer between a ditch on one side and the deep mud on the other.

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"Just keep on till we get out of sight of the main road, then we can turn back," said Colchester.

But luck was not with them. Just ahead was a huge puddle, stretching clear across the road. Sands swore as he saw it, and tried to steer through what looked like the shallowest part. They were almost through when the car stopped moving. The wheels kept going, but not an inch did they progress.

"There we are!" exclaimed Sands disgustedly. "We'll have to get out and shove her through. We're not out of sight, either."

"Maybe they won't think to look this way if they come along before we get started," said Colchester as they climbed out of the car.

"Maybe they won't come along at all!" muttered Sands sarcastically.

They did come along, however, while the three were still pushing and straining to get the car out of the mudhole. They heard the sound of Morrison's machine, and looking around saw it, not a hundred rods away, as it went straight on past the cross-road.

"They didn't see us!" cried Butt. "Why can't we go back now instead of going ahead? They'll keep on going: they won't think they've passed us."

"That's the thing to do," said Sands. "See if you can push her backwards. Wait a second!" and he threw in the reverse. "Now push!"

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That worked better. The car moved, and at length the front wheels were out of the water.

"That's all right," called Sands. "Wait a shake now and I'll see if I can't turn round. It's a crime to have a road like this in a Christian country."

Turning around was a difficult matter, and while Sands was still maneuvering to accomplish it successfully, Butt gave a sudden cry of consternation.

"They're coming back!" he exclaimed.

It was so. As Bill had foreseen, the tracks of Sands's car had served as a guide to Morrison. He had not gone far past the cross-road when he saw that they were no longer visible, and he had straightway turned back to find out what had become of them. Crane saw the stalled car at the same instant that Butt saw them, and he let out a yell of glee.

"There they are!" he cried. "They're stuck!"

"Look out you don't get stuck, too," spoke Thornton warningly as Morrison turned out from the main road.

"We can't get through here," said Morrison, bringing the car to a stop. "What shall we do?"

Within hailing distance of one another, the two parties, pursuers and pursued, held separate councils of war. And while they conferred Bill came along on the motorcycle. He stopped within a few rods of Morrison's car, where Crane was the first to catch sight of him.

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"Ridgeway Bill," he cried, "you're a thief and a rascal! Do you realize that that is my machine which you are using for a devilish purpose, and that when you kept it against my will you were committing an act of thievery?"

Bill grinned.

"Aren't you planning how you can do something of the same kind right now?" he asked.

"That doesn't make any difference. You hand over my property."

"Please, Bobby, I'm not through with it yet. Besides, you've got something a lot more aristocratic to ride in, and I couldn't get home if I didn't have this."

"Cut out kidding with him and get down to business," said Thornton, impatiently. "They've got Sabrina there in the machine. I can see her covered up with a blanket. Shall we make a rush for it and fight it out?"

"I don't see what else there is to do. They won't hand her over peaceably, though we might ask them, just to see."

"Come on, then," and Thornton jumped out of the car. "You'll have to leave the machine, Morry. We need your strong right arm."

The others followed Thornton, who started to lead the way down the road. They were four against four, not counting Bill, and Morrison was worth two.

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When they had gone about half the distance they stopped.

"Hello!" called Crane genially.

There was no reply at first, then Colchester answered:

"Hello."

"You have something with you we want very much," Crane went on.

"We haven't a doubt of it," Colchester responded.

"Will you hand it over to us in a kindly and gentlemanly fashion, or shall we come and get it?"

"I'm afraid you'll have to try to come and get it."

"Oh, very well. You compel us to do something that is extremely distasteful, but I suppose you know your own minds. Come on," Crane added, starting forward again. Sands had finally got his car turned around and the other three were getting into it again.

Suddenly there came a loud report, as of a gun being fired, from Morrison's auto. Morrison turned with an oath. Another report followed, and a few seconds later another.

"Look what he's doing!" he cried, running back, with the others following.

During the interchange of words between Crane and Colchester, Bill had been hunting through Morrison's tool kit for something pointed. He found

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what he was looking for, and with it proceeded deliberately to puncture Morrison's tires. As Morrison started running back a fourth report told that the job was completed. Bill tossed the tool into the tonneau with a laugh and mounted the motorcycle again. He retreated to the cross-roads and there dismounted to await further developments.

Morrison surveyed the ruin, swearing fluently.

"That fixes us," he exclaimed. "I've only got two extra tubes."

"Looks like first blood for the other side," remarked Crane. "Ridge Bill," he added, raising his voice, "that's your second offense to-day. You'll be a hardened criminal if you aren't careful."

"Will you be serious, Bobby?" cried Thornton angrily. "This isn't getting Sabrina or anything else."

"What's the use of getting sore?" asked Crane placidly. "If I can't fight in a nice friendly fashion, I won't fight."

"You're the limit, that's all I can say," said Thornton, disgustedly.

"They're going to try to get by!" cried Wilkins, looking back.

They were, for a fact. With head bent low Sands was sending his car forward full speed. He would have to turn into the ditch to avoid crashing into Morrison's disabled machine, but by good luck

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and brushing close he might get by. Thornton and Wilkins braced themselves to spring at the car as it passed, while Morrison hunted feverishly about in his tonneau for the pointed tool Bill had used, longing wrathfully to give some return for those punctured tires.

Crane, meanwhile, had coolly taken his stand in the ditch, directly in the path of the oncoming car.

"Get out of the way, you fool!" cried Thornton in alarm. "You'll get run over!"

"No, I won't," responded Crane, serenely. "They'll stop before they'll do that."

He was right. Sands was already putting on the brake and Crane broke into a low laugh at the effectiveness of his simple little move, when Bill interfered again. With a long, low dive he tackled Crane football fashion, flinging him safely over the ditch and leaving the path clear. He was up again and scudding back to the motorcycle before Crane could pick himself together, and it was too late now for him to repeat his maneuver. Sands was already driving past, but the slowing up had spoiled his impetus, and the car wallowed and almost came to a stop as it struck the ditch. Thornton and Wilkins both sprang for the back seat, which Colchester was helping to defend, but they were two against three and the advantage with the three. The best they could do was to drag out Meredith with them as they fell



“They came speeding on, desperately trying to improve every minute they had gained.”

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back to the ground. It had been a brief fight, barely a minute long, which Morrison had wasted in a vain attempt to find Bill's tool of destruction.

"Keep on!" cried Colchester to Sands as they swerved into the middle of the road again. "We're free of them now, and they'll take care of Merry."

So they kept on, turning back into the main road and on in the direction they had taken at first. Bill had gone on ahead, and he slowed up to wait as they came speeding on, desperately trying to improve every minute they had gained on their pursuers.

"Effie!" cried Butt, "can't we take Bill along?"

Sands began to slow up before Colchester had time to answer.

"He deserves to come if he wants to," he said.

"Come on, Bill!" called Colchester. "Shake that contrivance you've got and ride like a gentleman. You'll have to work your way, though."

Bill was willing. He got into the tonneau with Butt, grinning joyfully.

"Bobby wants his machine, anyway," he said.

"He began teasing me for it even before we left Tresham. I guess he'll find it there, all right."

And on they sped again.

"That was a great stunt of yours, spoiling their tires," exclaimed Butt in admiration.

"It will hold them there for a while. How long before they can fix them, Phil?"

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“An hour and a half, anyway, and probably more. I don’t believe he’s got four new tires,” Sands shouted back without turning his head. “We’ve got that much start on them, anyway.”

A town lay ahead of them, and they went more slowly till they had passed through its quiet streets. Then their way lay among the hills again, by a rough and narrow road that made rapid going impossible. Here dusk began to fall upon them, and now that the sun was gone the chill March night set them to shivering.

“I guess we’ll need that blanket more than old Sabrina will,” exclaimed Bill, his teeth chattering.

“There are some robes under the seat,” said Sands. “You’d better get them out.”

It was an odd-looking carful that passed through the next town, each man muffled closely in a big laprobe, but it was dark now, and few people saw them as they sped silently through and on up the valley that lay beyond.

“We’ll hit the state road pretty soon after we cross this next ridge,” said Sands. “Then we can let her out.”

For hours they kept on, through cities, towns and quiet villages, with stretches of lonely countryside between. Bill crouched down under his blanket, shivering now and then with something that was more than cold. Pressing against his knee was the

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statue. By reaching out his hand he could touch her. What wouldn't hundreds of men back in Tresham give to be where he was now?

He did not know where they were, but he didn't ask. Sands was the guide now, with a definite goal ahead of him, and only once did they stop. That was to eat, which they did hastily at a little lunch cart in a small town through which they passed, while Sands visited the local bicycle repairer, who also kept automobile supplies, and laid in a fresh supply of gasoline. Then they were off again, for their destination was still hours away.

Suddenly Bill sat up straight with an eager sniff.

"Do you smell it?" he exclaimed. "It's the ocean!"

"We'll be there in an hour more," said Sands shortly.

After a time they came within sight of the sea, and their way led along a road that wound in and out among flat salt marshes. On their right the water gleamed cold and silvery under the moon, and a biting wind blew inland, keen with the smell of the salt ocean.

"Gee, I'm hungry!" exclaimed Butt. "Will there be anything to eat, Phil?"

"I guess we can find something. We're 'most there now."

A sharp turn took them through a wood of dark

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pinetrees, then a short stretch of open road to a tall gateway in a wall of stone. Sands stopped the car and got out.

"We're here," he announced, fumbling in his pocket for some keys. In fifteen minutes they were inside a big cottage, searching in the cellar for firewood. In another a huge fire was blazing in the hall fireplace, with the four cold and weary fugitives ravenously eating crackers before it.

"I don't believe there's another thing to eat in the place," said Sands apologetically. "I thought there was some canned stuff somewhere but I can't find it."

"These crackers help tremendously," said Colchester, stowing away another mouthful.

Just inside the doorway stood Sabrina, the firelight striking dull gleams from her smooth bronze surface. With a cracker in each hand Bill stood gazing at her.

"What do you think of her?" asked Colchester. "Rather well preserved, isn't she, for a lady of her years and adventures?"

Bill did not answer. The sight of that war-worn statue gave him a strange feeling that made him forget to eat. It was like a thrill, only somehow it choked him, too, and brought a sudden warmth into his throat and behind his eyes. It was only a piece of brass, of no great beauty even in the days before

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it had been so knocked about as the plaything of a lot of boys. But those very boys had fought for her with the same splendid ardor that would have carried them forward under the fire and smoke of battle, and paid her an homage that was no less loyal because it was the homage of youth, rendered half playfully and in a year or two to be looked back upon with a smile. Would years and wisdom bring anything that could inspire quite the same joyous, wholehearted devotion that this scarred old goddess awoke, if only for a fleeting minute, in the hearts of her followers?

"It—it sort of gives you a queer feeling, doesn't it?" asked Butt, and with a start Bill realized that the others were standing at his side.

"That's what makes it worth while," said Colchester, and his tone had dropped the jaunty note of a moment ago. "I don't know exactly what it is—perhaps it's what she stands for to us, sticking together and all that—but there aren't many things that give you the thrill this old statue does when you first see her." Colchester was a senior, but he was not yet very old.

Sands turned back to the fire and threw another piece of wood on the blaze, which broke the spell that had settled upon them.

"I suppose she's safe enough anywhere here in the house for the time she'll need to be here," he

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said, coming down to practical matters. "But I thought it would be a good stunt to put her down cellar. We can bury her under the woodpile there and all the odds in Christendom couldn't find her."

"It'll give her a change, anyway. I wonder if she was ever hidden under a woodpile before?"

"Where did you have her, Effie?" asked Bill. "Can't I know now?"

Colchester laughed.

"I don't see why not. I left her stored in a warehouse down in New York last year, and then this fall I had her sent home, and put in the barn there." He paused, his eyes twinkling.

"How long was she there?" demanded Bill eagerly.

"Till Christmas time. She was in a box in an empty stall for a while, with a lot of other old rubbish, and then when I found out the Musical Clubs were going to perform in town at Thanksgiving, I thought I'd make certain sure about having her safe, so she was buried down in the barn cellar. I have since learned that that was a wise precaution, for if it hadn't been done she would have been discovered."

"How?" asked Sands.

"Oh, someone suspected that I had charge of her, and he got a hunch to look in that barn. And he looked."

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“That was you, Ridge Bill!” cried Butt.
“Wasn’t it, now?”

Bill looked too guilty to make it worth while denying the accusation. A kind of shame was still uppermost in the mingled feelings with which he remembered that Thanksgiving night’s adventure. But the others, even Butt, thought it was a good joke.

“Then during the first part of Christmas vacation I took her down to New York again, to have her there for the banquet, but when that didn’t come off I took her back to Tresham. It has been a good many years since she was there last, and I thought she might like to have a look at the old town again. She’s been there till this afternoon.”

“Then you didn’t even have to leave town to get her?”

“We did leave town and rode around the country a little while, but that was all a bluff. We got her at exactly half-past three this afternoon.”

“I think we’d better be putting her away again if we want to get any sleep at all to-night. It’s after twelve now, and we want to be away from here before daylight,” said Sands.

“All right: lead the way,” said Colchester.

It took an hour to conceal the statue to their satisfaction. When it was done they stretched out on the floor in front of the fire for a little sleep: the

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beds upstairs were too damp to be useable without a lot of drying out. It was still dark when Sands awoke them again.

"It's time we were starting," he announced. "You'd better get some more blankets. They're upstairs in the front room. It's grown a lot colder."

It had indeed. With all their class spirit, they grumbled as they helped put out that lovely, warm fire and took their seats in the waiting machine. But it was Sands who had the hard time. The others curled themselves up and got some sleep, but there was no more sleep for Philip till he got back to college.

They reached Southboro late in the forenoon, and took the trolley car from there to Tresham, that their return might be as inconspicuous as possible. Bill went straight to his room for a nap, and Butt with him, and Colchester had to run the gauntlet of questions that awaited him at the house alone.

CHAPTER XII

THE FINISH

AS they soon learned, Morrison had become discouraged and returned to Tresham, with difficulty, the night before, disgusted with the pursuit. For two hundred separate hopes died when the tidings spread that he had come back empty-handed, and among them a vigorous one that had been carefully nursed all the evening by Theodore Burnet.

“We don’t deserve to get Sabrina, anyway!” he exclaimed, disgustedly. “I’ve always tried to make myself believe it was luck that has helped them keep her all this time, but there’s something besides that. They’ve got something we haven’t, that’s all. You can call it nerve or courage or anything you like, but if we’d been the ones with that statue and they’d got as near to it as we did, they’d have managed to get her away, I’ll bet on it.”

For Meredith had told his tale with great gusto, and all Thornton’s and Morrison’s denials could not

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down it. The four who had spent the night at the beach found that they were heroes on their return to college and were besieged for their individual versions of the adventure.

Each had some particular item to add that the others had overlooked, and altogether it made another very interesting chapter to add to the history of the goddess. But regarding what had happened after they left Crane's motorcycle lying by the roadside, none of them had a word to say. Meredith was the only man in Tresham College who heard the rest of the tale.

Only one thing made Bill uneasy, and when he told it to the others they laughed at him. Crane had not yet returned. According to Meredith, he had picked up his discarded machine and announced that he was going to continue the pursuit by himself. Since then they had not seen him.

"He followed us: that's what he did," exclaimed Bill.

"He couldn't have," said Colchester confidently. "You know yourself you couldn't keep up with us on that thing of his when we were really going, and we really went after we left them. Even if he could have tracked us for a while—and I don't believe he could—his old engine would have given out before he'd been forty miles. Do you know we went nearly a hundred and fifty miles last night?"

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"Well, I won't feel easy till I see him back in town and know where he's been."

"You'll see him back, all right, when he gets ready to come, but I doubt if you find out where he's been unless he happens to want to tell you. Bobby Crane does queer things and goes to queer places when he goes away, and he usually has sense enough not to tell about them."

Crane did not return till a day later, and as Colchester had prophesied, he kept his own counsel as to where he had been. He cast an alluring air of mystery about it, but those who knew him well knew also that he always did that, and would not gratify him by appearing curious.

Nor would Bill, for he saw at once that it would do no good. Crane made an elaborate pretense of shying away when he saw Bill coming.

"Ridgeway Bill, I wish you wouldn't come near me," he said, retreating precipitately. "You're a thief and a despoiler of other men's property, and I don't want to be corrupted by your society."

Bill grinned as if he enjoyed the little joke thoroughly.

"I returned your motorcycle in excellent condition, and you lent it to me of your own free will."

"That's dodging. You borrowed it under false pretenses. Ridgeway, you are 'Old Slouch' no longer. That was a title of honor and esteem, which

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I gave you under the mistaken idea that you were an honest man. And you turn out to be a Raffles instead! ”

Which was as serious as anything Bill could get out of him. But his uneasiness was not allayed. Not till he knew positively where Crane had gone when he left Morrison and the others would he be satisfied that Sabrina's present hiding place was not in danger. He resolved to keep a watch on Crane, which was no easy thing to do, because not only did Crane live away across the town from him, but he had played detective with Bill too often in fun not to know his methods. The best Bill could do was to watch for him in the places where he was accustomed to seeing him—in chapel, at certain recitations, on the street, and at not too frequent visits to Crane's fraternity house.

As a matter of fact Bill's fears had more foundation than he knew. Crane had followed Sands and his car for only a few miles that day and then seen that it was a useless effort. But he knew where Sands's summer home was, and putting two and two together, according to Bill's own way, had arrived at the conclusion that that was where they might have taken the statue. Leaving his motorcycle in a garage he had gone on to the shore by train, not with any immediate hope of finding Sabrina, but to learn whether Sands had been in the neighborhood or not.

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That proved a difficult thing to learn, for Sands had come and gone by night, when the few people who lived thereabouts were safe at home and in bed; but he persevered, and the results of a long day's inquiries quite satisfied him. He had finally found an old man who lived close to a railway crossing which it was his business to stand guard over at train-passing time, and in return for a cheap cigar he furnished Crane with the information that twice during the night he had heard an automobile pass—once at about eleven o'clock and the second time at about dawn.

That was as much as Crane could learn for the present. The chances were that the automobile had been Sands's, and on that supposition he set about making plans. These plans could not be put into action right away, however.

Sands would be leaving with the Musical Clubs for their Easter trip in two weeks, provided he was successful in getting off a condition that otherwise would compel him to stay at home. When he was safely started on this trip, Crane had a most carefully laid scheme to carry out. It was a bold scheme, but its very boldness was the only thing that could make it succeed.

The Easter vacation was to commence on a Thursday, and the clubs were to leave for the first concert of their trip that morning. Crane planned

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to leave town Thursday morning also, but a casual visit to Sands's room caused him to change suddenly. Sands was very doubtful, apparently, about being able to go on that trip. The condition was not made up, and he was not at all confident that he could pass the examination which a well-wishing professor was to vouchsafe unto him at the last minute. If he couldn't he was going home.

This casual visit of Crane's took place on Monday. He left the same night for Boston, where Sands's family lived in the winter. The carrying out of his scheme required even more boldness than he had counted on at first, but Crane was nothing if not bold.

It worked beautifully. By Tuesday noon he had presented himself at the Sands's city house as a college mate of Philip's, told a most plausible story to Mrs. Sands, and left with the key to their seaside home in his pocket.

By eleven o'clock Tuesday morning Bill knew for a fact that Crane had left town, and was closeted with Sands, telling the fears that fact had aroused in him.

"You're nutty, Bill!" exclaimed Sands, impatiently. "Clean out of your head! Crane hasn't any idea we went down to the Bay. How could he have? He couldn't have followed us."

"Of course I can't prove it to you, and it may

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be all nonsense. But I haven't been able to shake the idea that he was up to something when he didn't come back with the rest of his crowd that night. Even if it does turn out to be foolishness, it won't cost anybody anything but a little time to do as I ask. I've had hunches like this before, and they've always turned out to be good ones. If Crane hadn't gone away I'd give it up and not say a word—but he's gone!"

"He's gone home, of course!"

"I don't think he has. He didn't take any trunk with him, and he didn't tell anybody he was going home."

"Well, he wouldn't go down to our place on the Bay—I know that. It would be too risky. He knows that if I don't pass this exam I'll be going down there myself. I told him that only yesterday."

But Bill made still another argument out of that.

"That's why he's gone now, instead of waiting till to-morrow," he argued patiently.

"You'd make something out of nothing if you couldn't find anything else," grumbled Sands.

"What is it you want me to do?"

"Just go down there and make sure everything is safe."

Sands looked at him as if he were beyond hope.

"Just go down there? Why, man alive, I've got to spend fourteen hours out of every twelve plugging

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on this exam. Do you suppose I'm going to give up my last chance to go on a Glee Club trip while there's any chance left at all? "

"Then let me or somebody else go."

"Oh, you can do any crazy thing you want to. Here's the keys to the place and I'll give you a certificate of character, 'phone home to mother to send someone down to open the place up, or anything. Only don't expect me to stir from this room till that exam is over, except to obtain nourishment."

So it was arranged, and Sands spent a precious twenty minutes telephoning to his mother, for he was a hospitable person and he wanted the house to be habitable when Bill got there. It would have to be made so in a week or two, anyway. The twenty minutes of telephoning lengthened itself into twenty more, however, and Sands was seething with excitement when it was over. The next half hour he spent sending telegrams and giving directions to Bill.

"You leave on this next car, and you'll get to the Bay by five o'clock. What do you think? That man Crane has bamboozled mother with some tale about my sending him down there for the class because I was just leaving on the Glee Club trip, and she's given him the keys and sent William along to help him! He's got the finest nerve of anyone I know. Now I've fixed it up this way. Mother is going to get busy and get word to William somehow—William

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is our chauffeur—so you'll find him ready to help you, and I've telephoned to old Johnson, who's the town constable down there. I think Bobby Crane will find he's in quite a mess. By George, I've half a mind to chuck the whole business and go down myself!"

But he didn't. Bill went alone, and arrived at the Bay late in the afternoon to find William and old Johnson in possession, with Crane imprisoned in the kitchen, smoking a cigarette.

"Old Slouch, as I live and breathe!" he exclaimed as Bill entered. "And I dared to think I could outwit you!"

"Are you Mister Bill?" inquired Mr. Johnson, who was not aged at all, but a very able-bodied town constable.

"Here are my credentials from Phil Sands," said Bill, handing over the letter Phil had given him.

Mr. Johnson read it carefully.

"Well, what do you want I should do with this feller?" pointing to Crane.

"If you can just see that he stays right here for a while, until we get things fixed up, I guess it will be all right."

"Oh, I'll see to that, all right. Right here he'll stay till you give the word."

Crane took out another cigarette and lighted it.

"I suppose you know you are making yourself liable to a good deal of trouble by keeping me here

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if I happen to want to leave, don't you, Mr. Johnson?" he asked quietly.

"Now don't you talk to me about getting into trouble, young man! If young Mister Sands wa'n't minded to let you off easy you'd be liable to go to jail for bein' an uncommon slick house thief."

"Oh, very well. But remember, I warned you," Crane remarked calmly. "So the fair Sabrina is really here, is she?" he added to Bill. "I thought so, but I wasn't sure till the stalwart William here informed me that I wasn't to stir out of this kitchen till you arrived. I might have known 'Old Slouch' would be on the job somewhere. What are you going to do?"

"Got another cigarette?" asked Bill, sitting down on the edge of a table.

"Sure." Crane handed him his cigarette case.

"I'm going to let you have a look at Sabrina," Bill said, striking a match. "I think it's coming to you after all this trouble."

"You are too kind!" murmured Crane.

"I'm going to ask you to help us unbury her, if you will. And then I'm going to take her away, and after I've been gone about ten or twelve hours Mr. Johnson will let you go, too."

Crane blew out a cloud of smoke and peered at Bill through it, biting his underlip meditatively. Then he stood up abruptly.

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"All right: let's get busy," he said.

Bill led the way down cellar and the attack on the woodpile began. It took only a little while to pull it down, and for the second time in many years Sabrina was revealed to the eyes of those who were not her followers.

"I hope you won't mind very much, Bobby, but I wish you'd go upstairs again now," said Bill. "There's a little ceremony going to take place down here, and I'm sorry, but you haven't any right to see it."

"Far be it from me," Crane rejoined cheerfully, and started up the stairs with Mr. Johnson at his heels.

The next hour was spent in packing the statue. Darkness had come when it was finished, and Bill went upstairs again.

"Everything settled?" inquired Crane.

"Everything, and I'm going to leave you in Mr. Johnson's loving care. He'll see that you get the five o'clock train for Boston to-morrow afternoon. Good-by," and he held out his hand. "Do you know, Bobby, I'm sorry you're not a Sabrina man—you'd make such a good one."

Crane shook the offered hand and smiled.

"I'm rather sorry you are a Sabrina man," he replied. "If you weren't, I'd probably be one myself by now—but there are lots of times coming. I

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don't wish you very much hard luck, but I hope you get caught."

And so Bill left him.

The Easter vacation and the Easter trip were over. Sands passed his exam after all, so he and Colchester and Tod Smith had their last trip together; and because it was their last trip and they were seniors they acted worse than freshmen and had a fine time of it. Now it was over, they did not go directly back to Tresham, but went to New York instead, for another last fine time.

Bill and Butt went to New York, too, for the same purpose, only with them it was to be the first fine time. There they stayed in hiding, with a mysterious-looking box concealed in their closet, waiting for the night of the day when college should open again.

When that night came there were a great many other Tresham men in town, for Herbie Nichols had not been posted as to certain plans this time, and they worked without a hitch.

Late in the afternoon the mysterious box, and Bill, Butt and Colchester with it, left a certain hotel by way of a side door, an alleyway, and a large, covered moving van. It took over two hours for this van to make its journey, which lay through many side streets and crowded thoroughfares and ended at

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another hotel, not ten minutes' walk from the one where it had started. All this was to throw anyone who might be on the look-out off the track. Whether the driver of the van was exceptionally good at his job, or there was no one on the look-out, the journey was completed in safety and the box was delivered into a small room adjoining a large room, in which many tables were laid for eating.

It was in this room that the many men from Tresham gathered, and sat them down to feast. At the center of the longest table sat Robert B. Chanler, the toastmaster of the evening. Among those who sat at another table, round, not long, were Wilbur Durham, 2d, Thomas Jefferson Gray, John Hawkins, John Michael McCarthy and Ridgeway Bill, Jr. Those about still another table included Meredith, Tod Smith, Sands and Colchester. And there were a hundred others just as important and having just as good a time.

It was a most joyful occasion, with most appetizing things to eat. The soup had already been disposed of, and the fish, though that which had been placed before Meredith and Colchester was still untouched, for they had suddenly and mysteriously vanished. Once more the empty plates were taken away, but when the door opened again there appeared, not more food, but Sabrina, the heroine of the feast, borne by Colchester and Meredith. Slowly they

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brought her in, while the chandeliers rattled with the cheer that rose to welcome her. The cheer died away as they set her down in the center of the room, and for a minute there was silence as another even-year class gazed on its goddess.

Bill stood looking over Gray's shoulder. It seemed to him there was an air almost pathetic in that sitting figure, as if she were mutely appealing to them for something, and again he felt that inward surge of loyalty that had welled up within him when he first saw her in the firelight down in that silent house by the ocean.

He was wondering if the others were feeling the same way, when he suddenly heard Butt rapping loudly on the table to attract attention.

"Before we go through the ceremony that is always gone through at this time," he began, raising his voice so that everyone in the room might hear, "I want to tell you something that most of you don't know. Just a month ago to-day Sabrina appeared in Tresham for the first time in more years than any of us can tell. You all saw her, just for a minute, and many others saw her who will never see her again. You know what happened afterwards, and that she was safely taken away and hidden again. But she was not so safe as we thought. We did not know it, but one of the juniors found her hiding place, and we should not be having this banquet to-

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night if it were not for one man. That is Ridge Bill, who saved her for us. Billy, come over here! ”

A whole-hearted shout burst forth as those behind him pushed Bill forward, till he stood at Butt's side. He was grinning happily, but the choky feeling in his throat had grown and he would have found it hard to speak. He looked down at Butt, who laid one hand on his shoulder and went on with his speech.

“ Perhaps we can get him to tell us all about it later, but first we must salute our goddess. Everybody get in line, and—what do you say, fellows?—Bill shall lead us! ”

“ Lead on! Lead on! ” they cried, falling in behind him. And singing their oft-sung battle chant—to-night a song of praise—the long line began slowly moving forward to pay to the goddess her accustomed homage.

(1)

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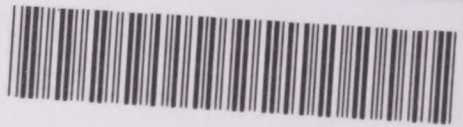
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